Walt Disney's

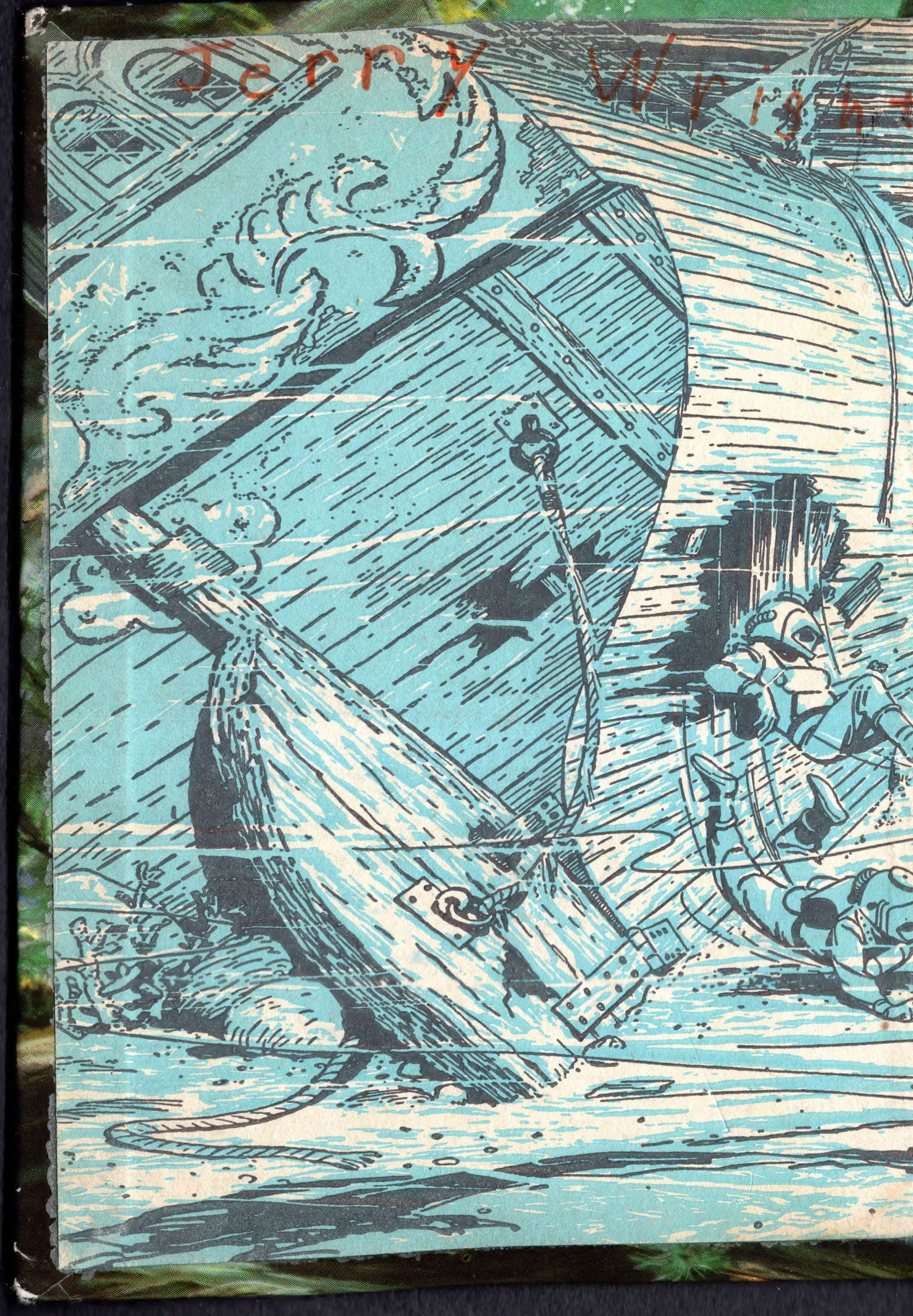
20,000 Leagues Under The Sea

Authorized Edition

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WALT DISNEY'S
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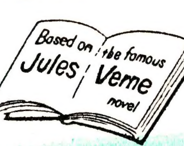




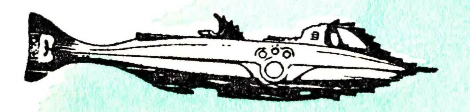


WALT DISNEY'S

20,000 Leagues UNDER THE Sea



From the motion picture
20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA



Story adapted by DICK HUEMER

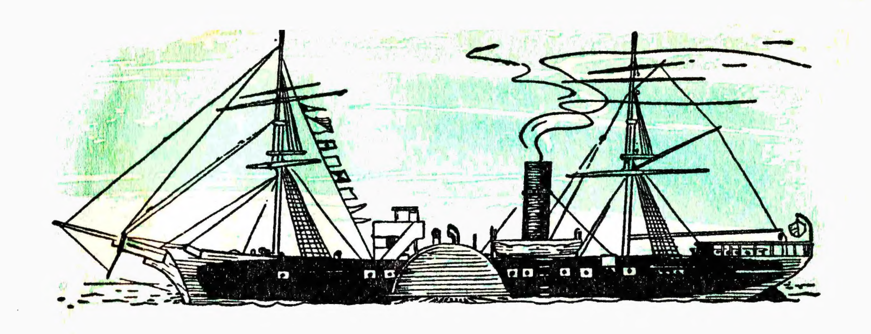
Illustrations by
ROY SCHROEDER and JOHN STEEL

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Contents


SEAMEN
WANTED



CHAPTER 1

Danger!

The fog swirled coldly through the muddy streets of San Francisco this gray afternoon in 1868. A crowd of seamen was assembled before the offices of the Great Western Steam Packet Company. They were listening to the anxious, persuasive words of an agent of the Company, but with scant sympathy.

"I say there ain't no sea monster," pleaded the Company representative, "but we need men, and just to treat you fair and square we're payin' double wages—and a bonus—from Frisco to Shanghai and back, all found—!"

"All dead, you mean!" came a hoarse jeering voice from the audience.

The agent's eyes sought the face of the speaker in the crowd before him. He could not tell who had uttered the taunting words. But what did it matter anyway? he thought desperately. How could he hope to combat this attitude held by all, especially when he himself did not believe in what he was trying to sell them?

On the outskirts of the crowd, one Casey Moore, a well-known character along the waterfront, had leaped on the back of a wagon and was now clamoring for the attention of the audience.

"Don't sign with him, mates," he shouted. "Ye can't buy off the sea monster with double wages an' a bonus! Ye'll never get back to Frisco to collect your pay, I'm tellin' ye!"

The agent rolled a despairing eye upon this latest interruption. His erstwhile listeners turned also.

Casey smiled in satisfaction. "That's right, boys," he crowed. "Listen to what I got t' tell ye!"

He pointed down beside the wagon where stood a shabby-looking derelict of an old seafaring man. He was leaning despondently on a pair of crutches.

"I got a man here who sailed on the *Golden Arrow*—and lived to tell about it!"

The attention of the crowd now switched to the crippled sailor.

"Go on," Casey urged. "Tell 'em about it. Give it to 'em straight!"

The man needed no further priming.

"It was the sea beast all right," he said in a cracked voice. "A cable's length from beak t' tail, it was! It come bellerin' outa the night! With one big eye . . . like a lighthouse shining!"

He paused for a moment as if remembering the hideous sight.

"Whoosh!" he cried, and smacked the side of the wagon

with a crutch. "We're stove in t' starboard!"

"Kerplunk!" he struck the wagon again. "We're smashed t'port! Then it comes at us amidships, breaks our back, an' sinks us! That easy! And forty poor sailormen drowned dead—or worse, eaten up whole!"

He looked ghoulishly around at the frightened faces of his hearers.

"God's vengeance, it was!" he cried wildly and stamped his crutches on the ground.

"The man's right!" shouted a sailor from the crowd. "I had a shipmate sailed aboard the *Golden Arrow* an' he saw it, same as you. Only he swears it had two eyes—and long shiny claws!"

The maimed sailor shook his head as he answered, with a positive air: "I don't rightly remember no claws, and I was up for'ard, too, where I seen everything."

But Casey broke in enthusiastically, appealing to the crowd.

"What's the difference?" he cried. "Y're both agreed it *was* the monster! The point is, this Thing is a devourer of ships and men—and it's a thunderin' miracle old Billy here's alive today. And he ain't told ye all yet!" He put his hand on the cripple's shoulder. "Tell 'em about its teeth, Billy boy," he coaxed.

Billy looked around to be sure he had the undivided attention of his audience.

"By the Great Horned Spoon, I swear it," he whispered hoarsely. "Every bit as big as a mainsail they were! An'

with it he had a breath like a furnace!"

"You've got a pretty strong breath yourself, my easy-talking friend," came a new voice from the crowd.

All turned to look at this latest participant in the debate. They saw a tall, muscular, superbly proportioned young man, wearing the clothes of a whaler. He was forcing his way through the crowd toward the wagon.

"Ned Land's the name," he said genially. "Do y' mind answering a few questions? I'm a harpooner by trade and monsters interest me." He glanced up at Casey and added with a significant grin, "All kinds!"

Casey accepted the challenge and leaped down from the wagon.

"Keep yer neb out o' this, ye noisy sea-lawyer!" he snarled, confronting the newcomer.

Ned Land placed a large capable-looking hand on Casey's chest to hold him back.

"I just wanted to smell old Billy's breath," he jibed. "No need to smell yours!"

He made a grimace of distaste and pulled back from Casey and Billy. Then with a broad smile he turned to the crowd.

"Why, boiled down for their spirits, lads, there'd be free grog for all hands, providing you could swallow it on top of all these tall yarns—"

He could say no more, for he was suddenly employed in ducking a wild swing aimed at him by Casey. He brought his own right up in a neat counter, connecting solidly and

sending his assailant teetering back toward the crippled Billy.

Casey stood for a brief moment with a blank look on his face and then with a bellow of rage he seized one of Billy's crutches and leaped toward Ned Land, flailing and cursing. One of his wildly aimed swings caught the latter squarely upon the head and sent him spinning into the mud. It was Ned Land's turn to be momentarily stunned. But as he lay blinking, the sight of Casey rushing at him, intending to stamp upon him with his heavy boots in the sanctioned rough-and-tumble fashion of the day, shocked his numbed brain back to sensibility.

He lunged forward from his position on the ground and, grabbing Casey around the knees in an iron grip, he hurled him sideways into the slime of the gutter. Then flinging himself upon his opponent, he let his superior strength assert itself. The joy of battle sang through his veins as he shoved Casey's head down into the oozy mud, punctuating each push with the cry: "So! It's a fight y' want, heh? . . . So! It's a fight y' want, heh?"

Suddenly, above the shouts of the milling crowd came the shrill cry of "Coppers!" Pulling the now limp Casey to his feet, Ned delivered a tremendous right smash to the jaw which sent the unfortunate sailor literally flying through the glass-fronted shipping office, where he lay sprawled in a litter of broken glass and wrecked ship models.

Ned's teeth flashed whitely in his sunburned face. Then

he whirled to see two officers of the law bearing down upon him. Nimbly springing over the wagon to elude them, he found himself trapped by the crowd which had pushed forward eagerly to witness the fun.

Faced with the choice of thrusting aside an attractive young lady, or allowing himself to be collared by the police, he unhesitatingly chose the latter course. He submitted to the officers with good grace and what seemed like an easy familiarity with the formalities of arrest. It had, indeed, happened to him many times in many ports.

The demure cause of his present predicament gave him a rueful glance and murmured, "I'm very sorry. If I had not been in your way—"

Ned flashed his genial smile at her. "Don't you fret your pretty head about it, sister. I didn't rightly know where to spend the night anyway."

He shook off the restraining hands of the policemen. "You don't have to collar me, boys," he bellowed cheerfully. "I know my way to the pokey. Let's go!"

The crowd was still actively milling about as he shouldered his way through, with the two constables struggling alongside trying to keep up with him.

Unwilling spectators of this lively street brawl were two foreign-looking gentlemen whose conveyance found its passage blocked by the crowd. They sat in their open carriage surrounded by as varied a cross-section of humanity as could be found in the port of San Francisco. Among sailors



of all nations and colors were interspersed prospectors, flashily dressed women, blue-uniformed soldiers from the Presidio, adventurers, and the usual sprinkling of derelicts and riffraff whose presence could always be counted upon when anything unpleasant was afoot.

The elder and more distinguished-looking of the two men impatiently snapped shut a book he had been studying as they rode along. His gray eyes looked about him anxiously.

"*Mon Dieu,* another massacre!" he exclaimed in shocked tones.

His chubby companion gave a grunt of disgust and addressed himself to their driver.

"Is there not a better road to the docks?" He had a very pronounced French accent, more so than his companion.

With an amazing disregard for its ultimate destination, the driver let fly a whopping squirt of tobacco juice before turning to reply.

"Wa-a-al," he drawled, "Montgomery Street's shorter, I reckon."

"Well, why do you not take it then?" was the petulant query.

"Kinda dangerous," was the slow reply. "Chinese are havin' a bit of a tong war this week."

"Pfah!" muttered the little Frenchman as he sank back to his seat, exasperated. "What a town!" he complained. "Lynchings! Street brawls! Riots! I tell you, Professor Aronnax, I shall not be sorry to leave San Francisco!"

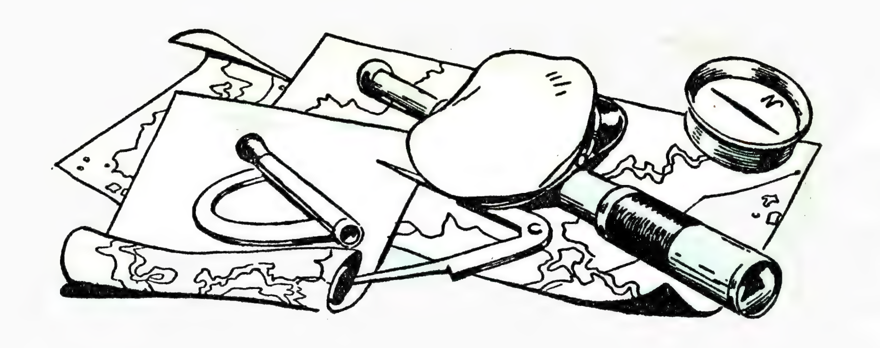
The man addressed as Professor Aronnax gave a wry smile and answered, "Reminds one of a continuous Bastille Day, eh, Conseil?"

"At least there are patriotic motives behind the unruliness of Bastille Day," was Conseil's rejoinder. "This is plain barbarism."

The driver cut in. "Say, there's a right fine hangin' scheduled for eight t'night, in case'n you're interested. Down t' the Presidio. Advise ye to git there early."

Conseil bristled. "We are *not* interested," he retorted hotly. "We'll be at sea by that time—and thankful for it."

The driver hooted derisively. "Thankful, y' say? Hah! Me, I'd rather be hung, yes, and quartered, too, than go t' sea these days!"



CHAPTER 2

Sea Monster Hunters

On the Embarcadero, the carriage rattled across the cobblestones and creaked to a stop at the wharf of the Oriental Packet Lines. There was an unwonted air of desertion about the waterfront which the creeping fog did nothing to dispel. Practically the only sounds of life came from a ramshackle tavern fronting the bay.

"This bodes no good," worried Conseil, as he pointed to an elderly man who had just come from the direction of the dock, followed by a porter bearing a mass of luggage.

Indeed, when the porter saw the driver start to remove the new arrivals' bags from the carriage, he called out to them:

"You might as well leave them bags be. The sailin's been canceled."

"What? Again?" said the professor in a disappointed voice.

Conseil clambered out of the carriage.

"We shall see about this," he muttered indignantly and

scuttled off toward the shipping office.

Professor Aronnax, always the calmer of the two men, shrugged his shoulders and climbed out of the carriage after him. The driver watched them enter the office and then unleashed another prodigious squirt of tobacco juice. He shook his head.

"Danged furriners," he said. "Don't know how lucky they are! Sure beats me!"

The musty little shipping office was alive with a group of frustrated travelers who were noisily centered around the desk of the agent of the Packet Lines. He seemed about ready to collapse under the pressure being put upon him.

"You surely can't strand us in this wicked town," protested a white-haired, clerical gentleman who was obviously a missionary. "I simply must be in the Solomons by Christmas."

The agent gave him the same answer he had already given at least a hundred others that day.

"I can't help it, Reverend. There's not a man-jack who will step aboard our ships—or any other company's ships."

He waved his arm wearily toward the dusty windows, through which could be seen the still, dark, silent forest of ships' masts.

For all Conseil's fuming, it was Professor Aronnax who asked the question when they faced the agent at his desk. He spoke quietly:

"I take it the sailing has been canceled again?"

The agent sighed. "Unfortunately, yes, Professor. The crew deserted this morning. There was no arguing with them. They are badly frightened men."

"But the professor simply must reach Saigon! Isn't there some other ship?" Conseil sputtered insistently.

"No, not a single ship. Nothing. I am very sorry."

The agent made a gesture toward the cashier's window. "The clerk will refund your passage money. The company is accepting no more bookings until further notice."

"Halfway around the world from Paris—and now to be held up here!" Conseil whined.

Professor Aronnax spread his hands in a Gallic gesture and said quietly, "Well, I don't see what we are to do about it."

"Except to pack—and to unpack! I've been doing it for weeks. It's most exasperating!" grumbled Conseil. He slapped his tickets down on the cashier's counter and scooped up his returned money in a petulant gesture.

While he was counting it, a young man, who had been observing the two Frenchmen from his place in the corner of the room, left it and approached them quietly. He tipped his bowler politely.

"You are Professor Aronnax of Paris, are you not?" he asked.

In answer to the professor's nod, he continued, "I am from the *San Francisco Bulletin*."

When the professor seemed not to digest this bit of information, he amended with a smile, "The *Bulletin* is

San Francisco's leading newspaper, sir."

He now indicated two other young men with the same appearance of alert intelligence who had, uninvited, joined the group.

"These gentlemen represent the *Globe* and the *Post.*"

"Also San Francisco's leading newspapers, heh?" returned the professor amiably.

"Touché! As you French would say."

"What can I do for you gentlemen?" asked the professor, looking from one to the other.

"As one of the world's foremost scientists, we are interested in your opinions of this sea monster which has been reported in the Pacific."

"Is there such a creature, Professor?"

"What do you know about it?"

The reporters were firing questions rapidly. The professor held up his hands good-naturedly.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Believe me, I don't know any more about it than you do."

He made a gesture to Conseil and both men started to walk out of the door to their carriage. The reporters followed, still firing questions.

"What does the National Museum in Paris think of such a monster, Professor?"

"I can't answer that."

"We've heard that this expedition of yours was to gather facts about the monster."

"I'm afraid you have been misinformed." He was smil-

ing. "My reasons for going to the Orient are purely scientific and are not to investigate any hysterical myth."

"Professor, doesn't the giant narwhal reach a length of over eighty feet?"

Conseil interposed an annoyed reply: "Why don't you go ask the narwhal that?"

They had now reached the carriage. Still trying to be diplomatic, Professor Aronnax answered seriously, "If we could descend deep enough into the ocean we would all be very much surprised at the creatures we might find there."

"Could any such deep sea creature destroy a ship or drag it under the surface of the ocean?"

Aronnax paused with one foot on the carriage step. "It might," he answered deliberately, "if it were big enough." And he climbed in and sat down in the carriage.

"I don't think they should be allowed to print that," broke in Conseil in protest, as he took his seat beside the professor.

"Perhaps not, gentlemen," agreed Aronnax, looking earnestly at the reporters clustered about the carriage. "I'll prepare a statement for you later." He took out his pipe and tobacco pouch to indicate the end of the interview.

But the reporters were not yet through with him.

"Then you don't deny that such a monster could exist?"

Conseil held up his hand in a warning gesture but too late to keep the professor from replying, "I am not denying anything."

"He doesn't *deny* it," said one reporter and he snapped shut his note pad.

The young men looked at each other significantly. Then, beaming and tipping their hats, they muttered their thank-yous and good-days and hurried off.

Conseil watched them uneasily as they retreated into the fog. "A strange breed of American," he grumbled.

But the professor, who was busily employed in lighting his pipe, merely nodded his head and puffed serenely. Conseil leaned forward and gave the driver the order to return them to their hotel.

It was early that evening that the blow fell.

Professor Aronnax and Conseil were in their hotel room. The professor, in smoking jacket and slippers, and wearing a turkish fez on his thining hair, was engaged as usual in poring over his books. Conseil was unpacking their belongings from their traveling cases.

When he had finally hung the last article of clothing away, Conseil turned to the professor, but the latter was so absorbed in his book that his assistant knew better than to disturb him with small talk. Instead, he idly picked up the copy of the day's newspaper which the porter had brought to their room a few minutes before.

"Sacre bleu!" he cried, and his prominent eyes seemed to bulge even further from his head. *"Nom d'un chien!"*

The professor looked up from his book through a haze of blue tobacco smoke.

"Eh?" he queried. "Does something upset you, my friend?"

Conseil looked up from the offending sheet. His face was red with pique. He slapped the paper with his hand.

"Just wait until you see how these pigs of journalists have twisted your words!" he exclaimed.

He thrust the sheet at the professor, who took it with a puzzled look and then raised his eyebrows in surprise as he scanned the heavy type heading.

He read aloud: " 'Sea Monster Exists, Says French Scientist in Warning to World!' "

He looked up at Conseil. "I made no such claims as these," he protested. "Just look at this ridiculous picture! This hideous creature soaring over the waves, flapping its wings, and carrying off a full-sized ship in its jaws! It is truly laughable!"

"I don't think it is so amusing," Conseil blustered. "In France this would be enough provocation to call a man out, swords or pistols! With your permission . . . er . . . I will demand satisfaction!" he ended lamely.

Professor Aronnax was not listening to him. He went on reading.

" 'Living horrors of the deep were described today by Professor Aronnax of the Paris National Museum.' " He read a few lines to himself with a slightly amused smile upon his face, then once more quoted aloud: " 'Sea serpents longer than a city block and larger still at greater depths—' "

"That's the most preposterous thing yet!" broke in


SEA MONS
PROFESSO

Conseil. "How did they dare to print it!"

Professor Aronnax folded the paper and slowly blew a puff of smoke from his lips. He looked reflectively at the lamp hanging from the ceiling around which the thick pipe smoke swirled and eddied.

"Preposterous?" he echoed, and then, slowly, "Perhaps not!"

Conseil looked astounded. "You're not serious, Professor!" he demanded.

"Oh, I don't mean flying off with a ship in its mouth," Aronnax laughed. "But the general size . . . hm-m-mm . . . it's a rather interesting conception."

Conseil acted as though his superior had just said that the world was flat. But before he could put his astonishment into words, there came a knock at the door.

"If this is another journalist, I shall order him away," muttered Conseil as he padded to the door and flung it open impatiently.

The man who stood there was tall, gray-haired, and dignified. He was quite obviously not a mere gentleman of the press. He had an air of importance.

"Excuse me," he said, and then, looking from one to the other of the Frenchmen, he asked, "Professor Aronnax?"

"I am Professor Aronnax. This is my assistant, Pierre Conseil."

Conseil nodded sulkily. He was still suspicious that their visitor was in some way connected with the dreadful San

Francisco press and was not to be trusted.

"Allow me to introduce myself," said the stranger. "My name is Howard. I represent the United States government."

He held out his card to the professor who took it and said, smiling, "Ah, good! We were afraid for a moment that you were another journalist."

Conseil instantly dropped his smoldering hostility and pulled up a chair as the professor invited Mr. Howard to come in.

"And now what can I do for you, my dear sir?" asked Aronnax after they had all seated themselves.

"I will be brief," answered Howard. "Do you mind telling me, first, when you have to be in Saigon?"

The professor shrugged and shook his head in a hopeless gesture.

"I should really be there right now but actually the first of the year would still do. But why do you ask, pray?"

"What would you say if I could arrange to get you to Saigon by the first of the year?" inquired Howard blandly.

"I would be interested, naturally," was the professor's puzzled answer.

"There is only one condition," continued the government agent. "That you proceed by a roundabout route—a cruise of three or four months through the South Seas."

He regarded the professor closely, almost anxiously.

But Aronnax nodded genially and merely murmured, "Good. Good."

Howard stood up immediately, an expression of great relief on his face. His mission was obviously accomplished.

"Then I want you and your assistant to consider yourselves guests of the United States government until we set you ashore in Saigon." He held out his hand.

"It is a great honor," said Aronnax, shaking the visitor's hand most cordially. "I would be interested in knowing, if I may, why your government has offered it to me?"

"The honor is ours," returned Howard, bowing his head politely. "As the foremost authority on the sea and its mysteries, you are qualified to be a most authoritative observer." He regarded Aronnax closely, and the professor nodded in understanding.

"After having observed, er, a certain phenomenon, or . . . having *failed* to observe it . . . a statement from you would carry great weight with public opinion."

"Aha! I knew it!" Conseil burst out. "That infernal monster rears his ugly head again!"

This angry outburst did not perturb Howard in the least. He continued as blandly as before:

"Quite right. The sea monster is responsible for this expedition."

He gave a sly glance at the folded newspaper on the table before the professor. "According to this evening's papers, you seem to be a firm believer in our monster, Professor," he added, with a smile.

"The professor was grossly misquoted," Conseil sputtered. "It is an outrage and a slur upon a great scientist. In

France we would most certainly demand—"

Aronnax held up his hand to sooth his loyal assistant and addressed Howard, saying quietly, "Misquoted I was, yes. But as a scientist I have an open mind on every subject —even sea monsters."

"Fine! Fine!" Howard was beaming. "The United States government has an open mind about them, too! Our position is a neutral one and we would be doing nothing about it if it were not for the fact that our shipping, particularly on the west coast, is coming to a complete standstill. We cannot ignore such a threat to our national economy."

"And I cannot deny the logic of that," Aronnax commented.

Howard leaned forward and his face became serious.

"Terror is spreading around the world. The Pacific, where this monster is said to be operating, is becoming deserted. I have it on the best authority," he continued gravely, "that other nations besides the United States are organizing similar expeditions. One in particular. I wish to impress you gentlemen with the seriousness of the situation."

Even Conseil seemed visibly affected. He looked at the professor, but he made no comment, and Howard went on urgently:

"Our expedition will be the first in the field. I like to think that your agreement to join us will give us another and greater advantage."

"That is very kind of you, *monsieur,*" said the professor and he looked to Conseil who was staring at him as if awaiting some final word. He tilted his head questioningly at his assistant who, in response, nodded firmly. Then Aronnax stood up and put out his hand.

"I accept your offer," he said simply.

Howard wrung his hand enthusiastically. "And now," he said, "if you gentlemen will be my guests, let us go down to dinner. There is someone I want you to meet—Captain Farragut, who will be in command of the warship on which you are to sail."

The dining room of the hotel was gay and noisy. Large, crystal, gas-lit chandeliers cast a soft glow over tables covered with snowy linen and glittering with glassware and silver. A string orchestra was trying valiantly to compete against a human symphony of laughter and conversation.

Howard and his guests threaded their way through the maze of tables and hustling waiters to a palm-sheltered corner of the room. There, seated at a large round table, were two officers in dark blue naval uniforms. The larger of the two men, by the insignia on his shoulder straps a captain, was reading an opened newspaper in front of him. Aronnax saw that he was frowning. As they approached his table, he looked up.

"Captain Farragut," said Howard, "I wish to introduce your passenger, Professor Aronnax. Professor, this is Cap-

tain Farragut of the United States armed frigate, the *Abraham Lincoln.*"

The two shook hands and then turned to introduce their companions. Formalities over, Aronnax addressed himself in a puzzled manner to the captain.

"Of course," he ventured, "you cannot be *the* Farragut—Admiral Farragut who was hero of the great naval battle of Mobile Bay?"

The captain laughed. "No, but we are related. He is my uncle. I was on the gunboat *Galena* at the same battle."

He moved the newspaper out of the way as they all seated themselves around the table.

"I've been reading your account of our sea monster," Farragut went on. "I'm afraid you haven't convinced *me* that there is such a beast."

"I forgot to warn you," Howard put in hastily, "that Captain Farragut is completely skeptical about the whole operation."

"Waste of good steam," interjected the captain, raising his glass. "However, my job is simply to command my ship and follow my orders."

"Well, I assure you my statements to the press were greatly exaggerated," said Aronnax smiling.

"I should hope so," returned Farragut vehemently, as he indicated the picture on the front page of the paper. "I can tell you this is nothing I would care to meet up with—not even with the heaviest ironclad in the entire United States Navy!"

"I wouldn't either," said Howard, slowly. "But whether we do or do not believe in a monster doesn't alter this grim fact," he slapped the table sharply for emphasis, "that a score or more ships, several of them American, have been lost under completely mysterious and totally unexplainable circumstances."

The captain twirled his glass by its stem and looked stubborn.

"Just a series of unlucky coincidences," he said, "caused by the usual hazards of the sea—storms, reefs, acts of God—and distorted in the retelling." And he added, "The sea is not man's natural element, you must remember."

"And what about the reported explosions and fires?" Howard persisted.

"Lay them to faulty boilers, improper use of steam—nothing else, believe me."

Howard displayed signs of impatience. "But what about survivors? The men who actually claim to have seen the monster and lived to tell about it. What about them?"

Farragut shrugged. "Mr. Howard, sir, there have been more harebrained versions of the sea monster than the Navy has beans. Sailors are a superstitious lot at best. I ought to know. And depend on it, when you've been too long at sea your eyes can play you mighty strange tricks!"

Silence fell upon the group as the waiter placed lobsters before each of the diners. As the attendant busied himself about the table, only Conseil had any remark to make. Staring at the shellfish before him, he murmured, "Hmmm,

a species of crawfish indigenous to the west coastal waters of America—no large claws."

When the waiter had finally left, the captain, feeling perhaps that he had been a little too positive in his remarks, gave a laugh and said, "Well, in the event we *do* run across this fearful sea monster, I can tell you he will not catch us napping! The *Abraham Lincoln* is armored to the gun decks with one-inch iron plate, and we mount the latest naval Dahlgren rifled cannon. In addition," he continued, with a forkful of lobster poised, and a humorous glint in his eye, "not only are we fully manned, but we also carry an extra complement of Sea Monster Hunters!"

He forked the white lobster meat into his mouth before proceeding. "Let's see now! We have one artist and two reporters—as well as a pair of lackeys to wait on them in the style to which they are accustomed on shore! Why, by jingoes, we've even secured the services of a master harpooner, a certain Mister Ned Land—a mighty handy man with the iron!"

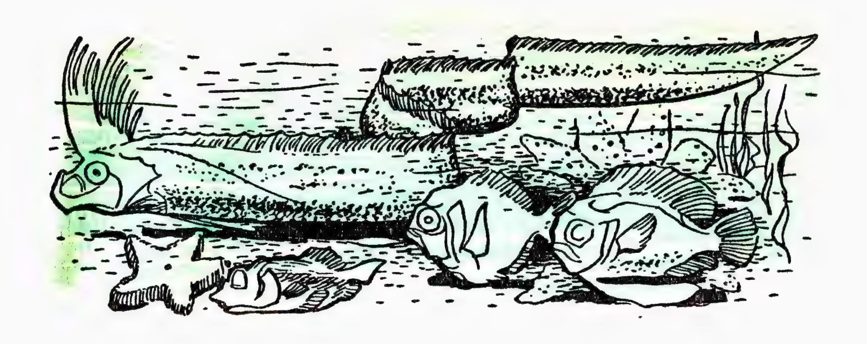
"He's a handy man with his fists, too, sir," added Lieutenant Hardy, who had up until now taken no part in the talk. "At the moment I hear he is in jail for street brawling."

"See that he is bailed out before sailing time," ordered the captain. "This fellow may well be the David that brings our Goliath of the seas to its downfall." He chuckled.

The thought of a mere flesh-and-blood man confronting, with his puny harpoon, an enormous, scaly, and ferocious

beast the size of the largest ship brought a smile to the faces of all present. With good humor restored, the captain raised his glass high. "To the sea monster!"

Each man echoed the toast, "To the sea monster!" and drank.



CHAPTER 3

Looking for Trouble

With mixed feeling, the crowds along the Embarcadero watched as the *Abraham Lincoln* stood out to the channel and slowly brought her jib boom around to point a bony finger toward the Golden Gate.

All San Francisco had heard of the expedition and followed the preparations for it with avid interest. And now it seemed that all San Francisco had gathered at the docks to witness the start of the great adventure. People crowded forward, straining to see more.

Some—in fact, most of the spectators had come with pity in their hearts for the ill-starred crew of the gallant warship. "Tis the last we'll ever see of them, mark ye well," was the comment of more than one gloomy watcher on the pier.

Some—but they were very few—thought the whole thing a great lark.

Still others among the crowds were stirred to their very depths by the bravery of the men who were venturing in

line of duty to an almost certain death by an unknown horror.

From these, a ragged cheer crackled. A plume of white smoke shot up through the black pall belching from the frigate's two smokestacks and in seconds came the answering whistle. It sounded a note of confidence, as well as defiance. The whistle seemed to proclaim to all who listened that no faint hearts were aboard this proud ship-of-the-line.

Slowly the vessel pursued her lonely way toward the sea and the mystery that awaited her there. Slowly she passed through the Golden Gate, past those portals of safety, and almost immediately was swallowed in a heavy blanket of fog that lay outside. For a moment she reappeared and her shadowy outline was seen shimmering eerily. Then, like a phantom ship, she gradually faded away into the gloom of the fog. It seemed like an ill omen to those who watched.

The citizens and seamen went soberly back to their daily affairs. But all that day, talk in the city circled endlessly on the *Abraham Lincoln,* and wherever people met their conversation eventually led to the battleship. And so it would be, for many a day.

Once upon the open sea, Captain Farragut set the *Abraham Lincoln* on a southwesterly course. His plan of action, arrived at with the cooperation of the Navy Department in Washington, was to divide the South Pacific

into large squares and to search each one painstakingly. None had been able to devise a better plan, and, in fact, the captain felt there was no other way to tackle the tremendous problem with which he and his ship had been saddled.

For the first two days, no extra watches were kept, for the sea monster had never been reported in waters so close to the continental United States. But upon reaching what must be considered a critical area, vigilance became the order of the day. Extra lookouts were posted and watches were increased around the clock. Also, from that day on, the ship steamed in circles, crossing and recrossing her own path.

Captain Farragut was a good and conscientious officer. Regardless of his own personal belief in the matter, he was determined to do a thorough job and leave as little as possible to chance. He did, however, reserve the right to remain at all times the skeptic.

Even more skeptical than his chief was the harpooner, Ned Land. From the very first, his shipmates' superstitious belief in the monster had irked him no end. Several times he had been on the verge of hammering home his opposite viewpoint on the subject with his bare fists. Only the knowledge that no one would bail him out of the ship's brig, as he had been rescued from the San Francisco jail, kept him in line.

When the lookouts, with which the rigging was now swarming night and day, sighted suspicious floating objects

and gave the alarm, Ned Land kept scornfully aloof from the attending excitement. On such occasions he did not even bother to fetch his harpoon. And when each object sighted was proved to be something other than the expected sea monster—in one case a normal-sized narwhal, in another a capsized Chinese junk floating forlornly far from its home waters—Ned was always on hand to say derisively, "Hah, told you so!"

It was the seventh of September.

The expedition had now been under way for three weeks. Ned Land and Professor Aronnax were leaning on the taff-rail smoking their pipes and talking. There was something about the bronzed young seafarer that attracted the elderly Frenchman. Perhaps it was the former's animal-like vitality and his straightforward manner. A spade was certainly a spade to Ned Land, and he never hesitated to speak his mind to anyone.

For his part, the harpooner had seemingly grown fond of Aronnax also. They spent a great deal of time together, Ned freely telling the professor tales of his whaling voyages to the Arctic and Antarctic. The sailor was a keen obeserver of the things that went on in the oceans of the world, and told his stories with intelligence. This very fact puzzled the good professor.

"It strikes me as very strange," Aronnax was saying, "that you of all people on board should be the most violently opposed to the idea of the existence of our sea monster. You



with all your knowledge of and experience with the great sea mammals!"

Ned chuckled. "Yep, I've harpooned many a whale in my day. Some mighty big ones, too, I can tell you. But however big they were or however strong, there wasn't a one that could even make a dent in the iron plates of a steamer!"

"One of the ships destroyed by the monster, the *Scottia,* was a wooden ship," Aronnax interposed. "She was smashed to kindling."

Ned shook his head. "All I know is I never saw it done —nor ever saw the living creature that could do it. Until I do, I just won't believe it."

He took his pipe from his mouth and cocked his head at the professor. There was a twinkle in his bright blue eyes.

"Come to think of it, Professor, I can't recall hearing you state your opinion straight out on the truth of this sea serpent."

"That's because I can't give you a straight opinion, my dear boy. I can only say that I can easily believe in the possible existence of a gigantic mammal, say of the whale family—a cachalot or a dolphin—which might have a horn-like weapon of great length and remarkable penetrating power."

Ned nodded. "Granted," he said. "What else?"

"I am also sure that if such an animal inhabited a depth of, let us say, several leagues below the surface waters of

the ocean, it must perforce be very strongly made and probably of tremendous size."

"How do you figure that?" asked the interested harpooner.

"Do you know what the pressure would be at thirty-two thousand feet below sea level?"

Ned shook his head and spat over the side for emphasis. "No idea," he admitted.

"Ninety-seven million, five hundred thousand pounds! Can you even begin to imagine the terrific strength and resistance a creature would need in order to withstand a pressure of such magnitude?"

Ned whistled in amazement. "A beastie like that would have to be made of iron plates eight inches thick—like an armored ram!"

"And if such a creature," continued the professor, "of such tremendous power and bulk, were to surface and be hurled at a ship—even an ironclad—with express-train speed, would not the results be very much as described in the reported series of ship disasters?"

The harpooner was visibly impressed. With his eyes fixed on the creamy wake of the ship and his fingers tapping the rail, he gave the professor's words some moments of deep thought.

Finally, he answered. "You've convinced me of one thing. If—and I still say if—such a critter lives at the bottom of Davey Jones's locker, he might be every bit as big and powerful as you say. But until *I* set my two mortal

eyes on him, Professor, I'm still not thinking that he exists at all!"

Aronnax smiled blandly at the harpooner. "And that, young man," he said, "is just about where I stand on the matter!"



CHAPTER 4

Attacked!

By December eighth, all on board the *Abraham Lincoln* felt that as far as finding the sea monster was concerned, the expedition had been a failure. For the past week, tension had gradually let down. The seamen were no longer in a state of nervous apprehension. Ned Land, his opinions apparently vindicated, now lorded it over them. He could not keep a certain swagger out of his manner as the men grudgingly deferred to his, "I told you so!"

It was a surprise to no one, therefore, when Captain Farragut entered the wardroom on the night of the eighth and addressed himself to his officers and passengers there.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we've done all that could be reasonably expected of us. The myth of an avenging sea monster has been fully explored in a thoroughly systematic fashion and has been duly exploded. We have freely exposed ourselves to this so-called monster for a period of three and a half months. You are all aware of the completely negative results."

One of the reporters was the first to comment. "Then you are definitely abandoning further search?"

"Yes, sir," the captain replied. "Immediately. In my opinion this cruise definitely sets the quietus on all idle rumors and silly newspaper distortions and exaggerations. We have accomplished our primary purpose and the sea lanes can be considered safe for travel once again. I trust that you, Professor," and he looked directly at Aronnax, "are ready to testify to this?"

It had been part of the bargain, that Professor Aronnax's word would add to the weight of the expedition's results. Therefore, he could not have done other than answer as he did.

"Yes, Captain, I am willing to testify that I saw no sea monster. I must admit I did not truly expect to see one, and all evidence of this cruise points to the fact that none exists." After a slight pause, he added, "I will keep all other private opinions to myself."

If Captain Farragut would have preferred something more positive than Aronnax's statement, he gave no sign of it. He merely nodded and said formally, "Thank you, sir. And now the United States Navy will live up to its part of the bargain. We will head straight for Saigon." He looked about the smoky, lamp-lit cabin and added, with a faint smile, "I know this is a great relief to us all."

Then he turned and left, to go to the bridge and alter the course for Saigon.

There was indeed a feeling of relief among those left

in the wardroom. The futile search had ended. The long, unrewarding months at sea would soon be over and they would touch land once more. Conversation became lively.

Conseil turned to Ned and said slyly, "Well, *Monsieur* Harpooner, there goes the bonus you were promised for harpooning the monster. A pity, really!"

Ned took it in good spirit. "Aye, 'twas a cruel bit of baiting, if you ask me. Offering me such a handsome hunk of money when they knew right well I'd never have a chance of collecting it!"

"Governments are often heartless," Conseil agreed, with a snicker.

"Ah, but the pretty ladies of Saigon are not," countered Ned. "I'll soon forget my troubles when we put in there! And I'll show you a time—hah!" He made a gesture of sheer delight.

"Non, non—merci," interjected Conseil hastily. "I mean, no thank you, if you don't mind—we—"

But Conseil could not finish, for Ned had picked up his guitar and was twanging out an accompaniment for his voice, which made up in power what it lacked in finesse.

> "Got a whale of a tale to tell ye, lads,
> A whale of a tale or two
> About flappin' fish, and the gals I loved
> On nights like this with the stars above,
> I swear by my tattoo."

He got up and strolled to the door of the cabin, then climbed the stairs to the upper deck, singing and playing

as he went. For want of something better to do, Aronnax and Conseil followed.

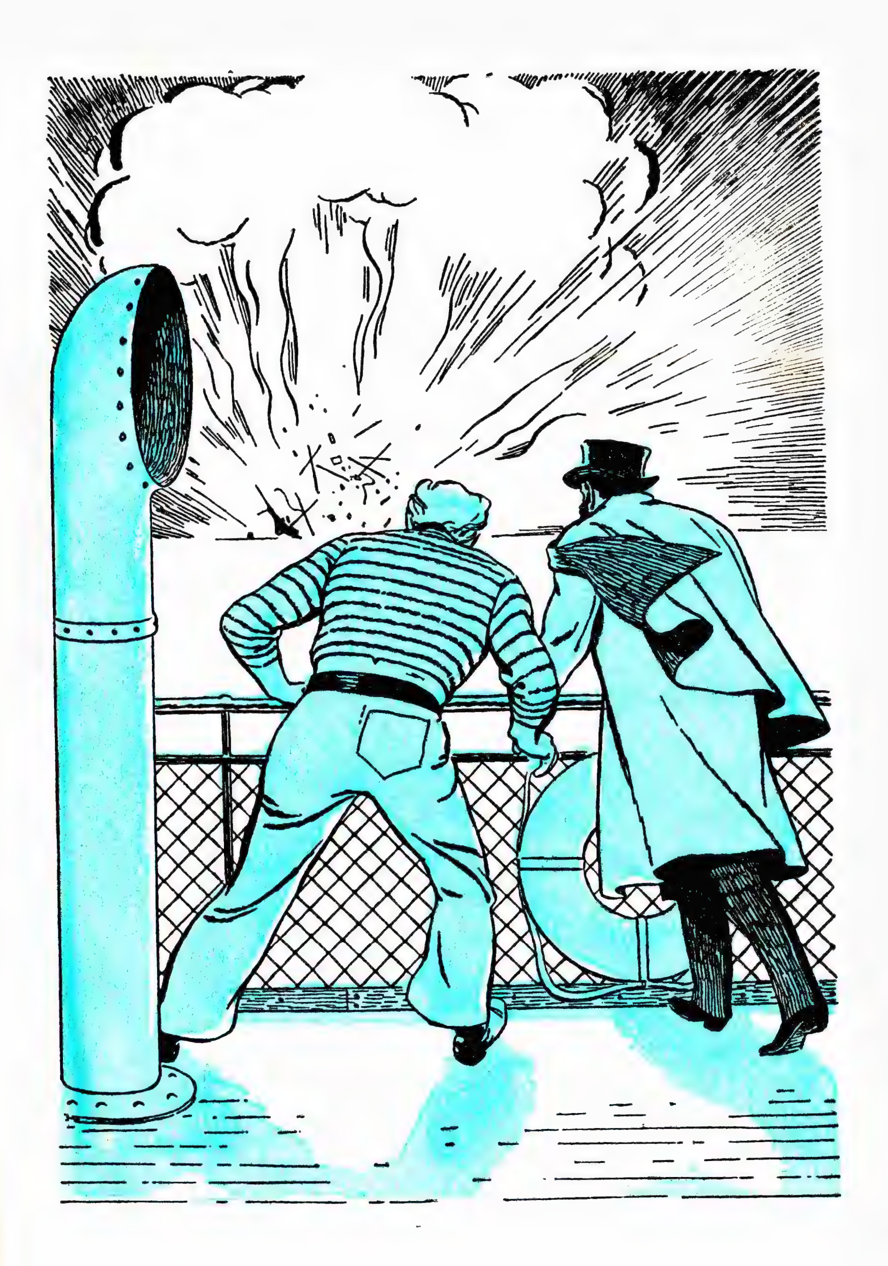
The professor was silent and very thoughtful. Conseil knew he was troubled about the statement he had just made about the monster—denying its existence when he, as a scientist, knew only too well there must be some foundation for the myth that had grown to such great proportions.

As if trying to soothe his superior's qualms, Conseil said, "I cannot help thinking, Professor, that none of this is any of our affair—that it never was, and never in the future will be."

It was as though his very words had given a signal, for even as he spoke, there came from far off near the western horizon a sudden flare of light that, for an instant, illuminated the ocean and every part of the ship. All on deck stood transfixed, staring at the spot from which the brilliant glare had come. It had died away in a matter of seconds and all was dark as before.

Even as all on deck held motionless, there came a second, even brighter burst of flame which subsided into a jagged area of fire. Flames flickered and their reflections were caught on the underside of a large pall of mushrooming smoke rolling above them.

Now a deep muffled roar reached them from far across the waters. The watchers felt the sharp blast of it in their faces. This was followed by a second, even louder, explosion of sound. As the distant flames rose and fell, explosions of varying intensity continued to rend the heavens with fury.



The port rail was jammed with excited sailors, all yelling and pointing. The first stunned surprise had given way to bedlam. Aronnax found himself crowded close by Ned.

"What does it mean?" the professor gasped in astonishment.

"It's a ship—exploded—burning up!" Ned explained breathlessly.

"Looks like running the forts at Vicksburg all over again," said a man who had fought on the Mississippi in the late war.

"Are we not going to do something?" Aronnax cried. "Those poor sailors! What a tragedy!"

"Don't worry," Ned answered. "The old man will put her around."

On the bridge, Captain Farragut lowered his telescope and turned briskly to the man at the wheel.

"Hard over!" he ordered. Then he called down to his second in command. "Mr. Hardy, pipe all hands to quarters. Stand by to pick up survivors."

As the helmsman spun the wheel, the captain stepped to the engine room telegraph and jammed it over to "Full Ahead." From the nethermost depths of the vessel came a jangling of bells in response, as he shouted into the speaking tube, "Full main steam ahead!"

With an answering shudder, the ship seemed to come alive, her engines straining to the utmost. The shrill screech of the bos'n's whistle cut clamorously across the tropical night. There was a confusion of running feet, crisp

commands, and the sounds of men straining at their tasks. An angry torrent of sparks poured from the smokestacks, and the water hissed along the sides and foamed furiously in the moonlight in the wake of the *Abraham Lincoln.*

With all the speed of which she was capable, the frigate sought to close the gap between herself and the floating pyre, but it was quite apparent to all that the fire-wreathed ship would founder long before they reached her. Indeed, as they watched in horror, there came another fearful explosion and what had still remained of the vessel sank beneath the waves. A lone mast burned brightly like a torch, for a while; then it, too, was extinguished in the black waters.

Still the *Abraham Lincoln* held to her course in the hope that some of the doomed vessel's crewmen might have survived the holocaust. As they finally came upon the scene of the sinking, the sailors of the frigate leaned far over the rails, and torches illuminated the fatal waters. Not much was left—some floating debris and little of that. There was no human being left upon the surface of the water to explain the dreadful occurrence.

"Foundered with all hands," muttered one of the reporters in awed tones.

"What could have caused such violent explosions?" asked Aronnax.

"Black powder—or it could be something much stronger," put in the sailor who had been at Vicksburg.

"But what could have set it off?" Aronnax puzzled.

"She might have struck something," Ned answered, but

without much conviction in his voice.

"Or—could it be that something struck *her,* perhaps?" queried Aronnax.

At these words, which voiced the secret dread of most of the men around him, there was a stir. The crewmen crowded closer, their faces questioning.

"What do y' mean by that?" asked one sharply.

"Y're meaning the sea monster might have done it, ain't ye, Professor?" came from another.

A third sailor crossed himself fearfully and said, "Aye, it might be the monster!"

There was a rising note of fear in the little group pressing around the professor. In a voice full of panic one of them cried out, "Sure, that's right! It's the monster that done it! D'ye hear that, mates? The professor says it was the sea monster!"

From over their heads came Captain Farragut's voice from the bridge, sternly commanding: "Belay that infernal jabber!"

As one man, the crowd turned toward him, faces pale with apprehension. But it was to the professor that the captain addressed himself particularly. His voice was cold with anger.

"Professor Aronnax, I must insist that you keep these fish stories to yourself. This is a United States warship and—"

A hoarse shout from a lookout high in the rigging sounded an alarm. "Ahoy the deck! Floating object close

abeam! Starboard! Ahoy the deck!"

Visible to all in the half moonlight, on the surface of the sea, was a long slender dark shape only a cable length from the *Abraham Lincoln*. Fully as long as the warship itself, it seemed to be swimming alongside, keeping up the same rate of speed.

Wild cries came from the sailors on the deck of the frigate as they crowded in utter disorder and confusion to the starboard side to view this sudden apparition. But Farragut's wrathful voice arose once more from the bridge.

"Get the men to their gun stations!" he roared to his deck officers. "Clear the decks for action!"

The voice of authority stemmed the rising hysteria instantly. The sailors scattered in every direction, each man seeking his appointed station.

Again the voice of their commander rose sharply above the roll of the drum and clatter of battle preparations. "Maintain speed, Mr. Hardy. We'll stick with this creature and bring it in tow!"

Those who were in a position to keep their eyes on the dark thing stalking the ship saw it rise suddenly on a long swell and briefly expose its appalling silhouette. Before it sank again out of clear sight, what the onlookers had seen put an end, completely and finally, to the doubts of even the most skeptical. For what had been revealed to them could only be a monster of the most fearsome species. Nothing else! From the long sharp horn that projected at least fifteen feet beyond its pointed snout, to its enormous

rigid tail some two hundred feet behind, it fitted all reports of the deadly monster. A spiny row of jagged sawlike teeth appeared to be growing in a ridge along the top of its head, to add a last touch of horror to the hideous sight.

"Shiver my mizzen!" muttered Ned. "It's all there but the flaming eyes!"

With those words, he turned and ran back into the cabin to get his harpoon.

Conseil watched him go in a dazed manner. "No, he cannot be getting his harpoon," he muttered. "A tiny harpoon against such an enormous beast? It is to laugh! The man is mad!" Then, turning to the professor who was standing beside him staring at the monster, Conseil clutched his sleeve and asked in shocked tones, "What in heaven's name do you make of it, Professor?"

Aronnax was also visibly shaken. "The stupendous size! It is unbelievable—though I see it with my own eyes! But whatever it is, sea monster or devil, here at last is that for which we have been seeking!"

"It is terrible—horrible!" Conseil's eyes were almost popping out of his head and his chubby body was quaking. "It will destroy us the way it did that other ship! *Mon Dieu,* our end is come!"

Ned now came careening out of the cabin with his harpoon and gear in his hands. He made straight for the longboat.

"Stand by to lower away the longboat," he yelled.

Now that he could see the tangible evidence with his own



eyes, he was all business. He would collect that bonus—or die! Several sailors sprang to his assistance.

"Here, give me a hand with these lashings," he ordered and fell to on the davit ropes.

From the bridge came another sharp command. "Fire at will! Fire when ready!"

There was a ragged broadside from the starboard guns, followed by the heavier boom of the forward pivot gun. Bursting shells illuminated the water all around the monster, but as far as could be seen there had not been a single direct hit. The solid shot from the pivot gun raised a huge white geyser of water far beyond the target.

As if stung to action by the shots from the warship, the monster's tail suddenly started to churn and flail the water with increasing violence. It began to draw away and, in an astonishingly short time, it had more than tripled the distance between itself and its attacker.

Professor Aronnax's reaction to this startling maneuver was a puzzled shake of his head. "It is behaving most strangely for a sea monster," he observed.

"But then what could it be, if not that?" queried Conseil.

"It is not a narwhal. Of that I am positive. It is too fantastic! And the speed of it! Why, it must be going at least fifty miles an hour!"

The thunder of another broadside drowned him out. A spread of shell bursts fell far to the rear of the speeding quarry. From the bridge came Farragut's stormy voice in angry rebuke.

"Look alive there! Get your correct range and fire, Carson! What in thunder is the matter?"

"She's showing us her heels, Captain," answered Hardy, in an effort to ease the pressure on the chief gunnery officer.

"Well, then hit her in the heels!" snapped the captain. "We can't let this thing get away, no matter what it does!"

In response, the gun deck sparked with renewed activity. The heavy Dahlgren pivot gun was swung and readied by its sweating crew to the accompaniment of a running string of commands from the gunnery chief. "Lively there! Load! Prime! Check your aim! *Fire!*"

Along the starboard side of the frigate, the smaller guns had again been served and run out through their ports, and all pieces now roared off in another solid salvo. This time the cluster of shells neatly straddled the monster, raising tall towers of white water among the orange shell bursts. But no hits were indicated.

"You're improving, Carson," called Farragut through his speaking trumpet. "Now let me see you put a few directly aboard that thing!"

A chorus of "Aye, aye, sir," answered him.

In the longboat, Ned Land had made all ready to be lowered away when the ship should close with the monster. Aronnax and Conseil could see his white teeth gleaming in his shadowed face. But he was not smiling; he was, in fact, furiously angry.

"Blast their confounded pop guns," he growled. "They're scaring it away! It ain't fair, I say!"

"But, my friend," protested Conseil, "this futile little harpoon of yours! Why, it would scarcely prick the hide of that gargantuan beast!"

"Not where I'd sink it," Ned snapped back. "I know my business. The whale doesn't live that can get away from me!"

Conseil gave a despairing glance in the direction of the shadowy monster.

"I only wish they would let it get away. I'm afraid they will infuriate it with this bombardment. Then who can tell what will happen! I've seen enough of your whale, I can tell you!"

"Oh, come, Conseil," chided Aronnax. "Where is your scientific curiosity? This may turn out to be the greatest zoological discovery of the century, if not of the ages. No matter what that thing turns out to be, I can promise you it will be enormously startling!"

Again his words were drowned out as another broadside flamed from the ports of the warship. This time the water close around the target was whipped into leaping geysers. It seemed that at least one of the shots must have landed squarely on it.

"A hit!" confirmed the lookout from the crow's-nest.

"Splendid!" cried the captain. "One more broadside like that and we've got it!"

A little cheer went up from the men as they fell to for the killing salvo. But in the next instant came a warning cry from a lookout: "Ahoy! The monster is turning!"

The men at the guns faltered. Everyone within earshot, from the captain to the cabin boy, stopped what he was doing to look at this new development. There was no doubt about it. The creature was turning—presenting its wicked horn in their direction.

There was something malignant and deliberate in its manner. It faced them from the distance in the semi-darkness as though making up its mind to attack. Then all those who watched froze with horror as the sea beast suddenly opened a pair of blazing eyes! These eyes were so bright that they cast a weird greenish glow around the water. Now the evil dark form of the creature could be seen clearly silhouetted.

Sensing the horror which held his entire crew in its grip, Captain Farragut called down from the bridge:

"Steady, men! Man the guns! Give it a broadside! The United States Navy won't back down for any sea monster!"

This time his steadying words were useless. As the fearsome creature began to move toward them, gathering speed every second, it let out a horrible, deafening sound that was halfway between a moan and a shriek. On it came, frightful to behold, with its blindingly bright eyes, and two enormous spouts of water shooting up from its snout. It was more than human flesh and blood could endure. Veterans who had been through the heaviest fighting on the Mississippi blanched before the onrushing phantasm. One cannoneer mechanically discharged his piece, but the shell went ridiculously wide of the mark. All braced them-

selves for the inevitable shock to come.

The professor stood rooted to the deck, his eyes fastened in fascination upon the sight. Not so Conseil. Seizing the professor by the arm, he pulled him, urgently and frantically. "Up here!" he cried. "Up here!" And urging his companion on, they both clambered into the lower shrouds.

The sailors who had been standing by to launch the longboat now deserted their posts and ran for safety to the port side of the ship, leaving Ned alone in the boat with his harpoon unlimbered. He faced the oncoming monster, his face and body illuminated by the unearthly greenish glow that emanated from its eyes. There was not a trace of fear in the harpooner's attitude.

But as the sea beast rushed upon the *Abraham Lincoln,* it gradually submerged and, by the time it reached the warship, as if by a miracle there came no crash! A brilliant swish of light passed deep beneath the ship's keel, leaving a fiery trail to mark its course. Emerging once more on the port side, the monster sped away toward the horizon. The turbulence left in its wake sent the waves slapping against the sides of the ship, rocking her wildly.

From the deck and the rigging, there now arose a loud murmuring of relief. Some of the crewmen, with belated bravado, even hurled unflattering threats and curses after it.

"Did anyone get a good look at it? What could it be?" All anyone could report having seen was a huge, elongated shape and an unearthly green glow. The question of

greatest concern to all, however, was whether it had really gone or whether it would come back to attack again. Every pair of eyes on the *Abraham Lincoln* stared after the glow that marked the departing monster.

They had not long to wait. Half a mile or so from the ship, the monster was seen to stop, then to describe a large half circle and end up once more facing the frigate, its two eyes glaring and evil in the dark night. Once more it was gathering itself for an attack.

A deep groan arose from the men on the ship. They knew now that this sea beast would not toy with them indefinitely. One of its charges would surely be made with intent to kill. Perhaps this one!

Captain Farragut was well aware by this time that his men were too demoralized to serve the guns. There was, in any event, no time now to load, aim, and fire. But he had no intention of taking the sea monster's charge without some kind of action. He did what he could.

"Get up your helm!" he shouted.

He would not present his ship broadside again if he could help it!

"Hard up! Hard up! Helmsman!"

Slowly the frigate answered her helm—but much too slowly.

The monster bore down upon them with nerve-shattering sound and baleful glitter of light. This time the horrified crew saw that it was not submerging as it had done previously. The cries of the men could scarcely be heard above

the hideous noise of the attacking beast.

Then it struck! There was a rending crash and a blinding glare as the beak and jagged teeth of the monster tore at the bottom of the *Abraham Lincoln*. The ship shuddered deeply and heeled far over as her attacker grated obliquely underneath her keel.

On the starboard side the force of the impact tore loose the longboat in which Ned still crouched. Out of his control, it swung far over as the deck careened slowly toward the water. Actually the longboat was launched upon the sea for the brief moment when the monster emerged from under the frigate's hull. It was the moment Ned had been waiting for, when the sleek top of the creature should present itself, open and unprotected. With extraordinary control and skill, he hurled his harpoon.

In all the turmoil that surrounded him, he was still able to take note of an astounding fact. The harpoon behaved exactly as though it had been driven against the side of an ironclad! It clanged and bounced off.

The next moment, the frigate began to recover from its sideways plunge and started to tilt back toward the port-side, pulling the longboat up by its forward ropes which were still attached to the davits. Ned Land found himself abruptly catapulted into the sea.

Meanwhile, Aronnax and Conseil were faring no better. At the first shock the mainmast had cracked and toppled to the deck. As the ship canted to the starboard, a welter of guns and gear slid slowly down toward the sea. Caught

in this debris, Professor Aronnax found himself helplessly borne overboard. As the frigate started up on its portside swing, he looked up and saw Conseil clinging to the rail. He called to him in an agonized voice before another wave swept over him.

As the rail rose high into the air, Conseil climbed over it. "Courage, *mon ami!*" he cried.

With but one desperate thought in his mind—to save his colleague—he leaped blindly into the sea. By a miracle, he avoided striking any of the floating wreckage, and in the dim light left by the receding monster, he began to search frantically for Aronnax. After what seemed a long time, he finally saw the professor's head bob to the surface. Making his way to his side, he seized the exhausted scientist firmly under the arms.

The fate of the two friends was now in the hands of Conseil. He was fortunately enough of a swimmer to paddle the professor and himself over to a portion of the broken mast. Although half unconscious, Aronnax clung to the spar with desperation until Conseil managed to pull him up and lash him safely to it.

The strain and terror of the past hour had drained the elderly professor of his strength. Even Conseil had reached the end of his endurance. The two men lay back on their uncertain refuge, insensible and oblivious to the fate of their comrades on the *Abraham Lincoln*.

A long time elapsed before Conseil recovered his strength. Then he sat up and looked anxiously into the night.

The monster had completely disappeared. The sea was black, the moon obscured by a bank of clouds. Far in the distance flickered the lights of the *Abraham Lincoln,* growing more faint as he watched. It was plain that the ship was steaming on without them.

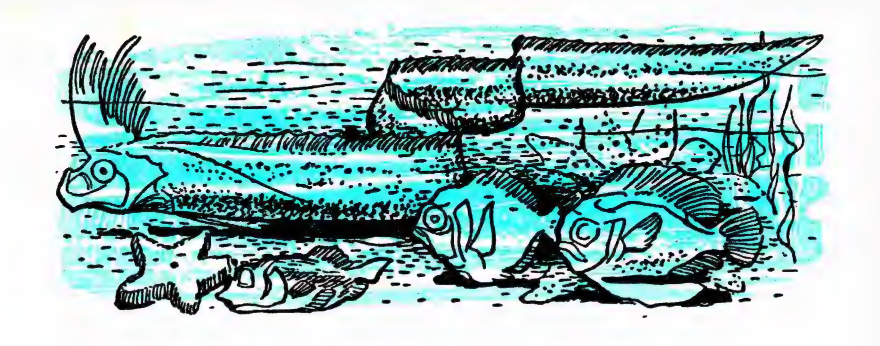
Conseil began to shout hysterically. But although he shouted until he was hoarse, no answer came from the stricken ship. The distance was too great.

Once he thought he heard a single voice, faint and far away. He even imagined it was Ned Land's voice calling to him. But it was not repeated and finally sheer exhaustion silenced him. He tried to console the professor.

"We have but to hold on," he said. "When morning breaks they will come looking for us. You will see."

But the professor was disconsolate. "Perhaps. If the monster is done with them and *if* they are still afloat! Ah, my dear friend, it is a dreary prospect that lies before us. Perhaps you should have let me drown. It would have been merciful, I think."

Even as he spoke, a dense fog rolled up around them, and soon they could see no more than a few feet away. Now in truth they were alone and lost on the fathomless sea.



CHAPTER 5

Miracle—and Mystery

The morning mist lay like a shroud on the bosom of the tropic sea. The night of terror had passed and, with the coming of daylight, the castaways anxiously tried to assess their position.

During the night, Conseil and Professor Aronnax had firmly established themselves on their small section of floating mainmast. A cross spar, with its furled rigging and sail still intact, was joined to their portion of the mast, creating, in effect, a raft. The arrangement even permitted a limited amount of movement. They were certainly far from comfortable, but for the time being they were safe. And although the fog-laden atmosphere seemed chill, the water itself was warm and there were no waves; only a gentle swell rocked their makeshift raft. Physically they were not in bad shape.

Mentally, however, it was a different story. Both men were well aware that they were facing a lingering and painful death on the vast and lonely ocean. Conseil, by nature

the more pessimistic and impatient of the two, ran through the hopeless future again and again in his own mind. Now that daylight was here, the pitiless sun would soon appear to beat down upon them hour after hour without relief. Then the numbing night again. And again the sun. The torments of thirst would soon be upon them. Finally they would be driven to drinking the salt water. Then would come madness! Although the end was always death, Conseil varied the vision in his mind; sometimes the two bloated corpses, blackened by the sun, were rocked endlessly in their macabre cradle to disappear in some awful tropical storm; other times they were sighted by a searching ship. He fancied the newspapers with the screaming headlines, the morbid interest of the world, and the sorrow of his poor old parents in far-off France.

He was back in the present, already moodily suffering from a fancied thirst and really feeling the first pangs of hunger when Aronnax spoke. It was the first word either man had uttered in hours, and the hollow sound of his voice was almost shocking in the stillness that surrounded them.

"I can see nothing," he said. "Nothing at all."

At the professor's remark, Conseil roused himself wearily into a sitting position, straddling the mast. He looked toward Aronnax, who was up by the cross spar. The older man was peering intently ahead into the thick fog.

"Perhaps when this mist lifts. . . ." Conseil suggested dispiritedly.



"It has been thinning out. For a moment I thought I saw something just out there," he pointed, "but I can certainly see nothing now. Aah, visions. . . ."

He shook his head and clasped himself about the shoulders.

"I am wet to the marrow," he complained. "I think I shall never be dry again—not even when the sun comes out!"

Conseil answered nothing. He sighed and looked about him with heavy-lidded eyes. Yes, he thought dully, there was no doubt about it, the fog would soon be dispelled and with the sun would come their real agony.

It occurred to him briefly to utter another call for help but he curbed the impulse. Of what use? He shrugged and with another sigh sank back on the log to resume his former position. He lay staring up into the misty ceiling that still pressed heavily down upon them.

Aronnax continued to probe the gray pall about him until his eyeballs ached. He began to imagine that he was seeing things. When he rubbed his eyes, however, the phantoms were always easily and disappointingly dispelled.

Then suddenly there was a phantom that *didn't* disappear! He rubbed his eyes again. He looked away, then back with quickening pulse. It was still there! Directly ahead, perhaps some two hundred yards away, was a long shadow only slightly darker than the surrounding mists. This time it was not a trick his eyes were playing on him. Something *was* there!

With barely suppressed excitement he called to Conseil.

"Conseil, my friend! Look! Up ahead! Can you not see something?"

Conseil sat up abruptly, peering anxiously in the direction indicated by the professor.

"Yes— Yes!" he sputtered. "Something is there! *Mon Dieu!* It is too much to hope! Land! An island! We are saved!"

The professor, however, did not share his assistant's wild joy.

"An island," he repeated thoughtfully. "Ah, dear friend, perhaps we should get on our knees and pray that it *is* an island. I myself fear it is something much different!"

Conseil caught his meaning instantly.

"You mean the monster?" he gasped. Now he was terrified. "But we are drifting toward it and cannot escape," he cried. He looked about him wildly. "Quick! Let us jump overboard. We can swim away and still escape from this awful beast before it sees us!"

But the professor did not move. Disturbed he certainly was, and not a little frightened, but his scientific training dominated his reactions. Even though in the next few minutes this thing might destroy them both, he could not help analyzing it— wondering at it—being thrilled by it. So it was that he answered Conseil almost calmly:

"No, Conseil, to jump into the water is surely to perish. Let us rather take our chances with this—object."

"Object! Or *beast!*" Conseil blurted. "What does it matter? It has been proven utterly pitiless and vindictive. We

cannot face it! We cannot do it!"

His prominent eyes popped out farther. "See!" he cried. "The mist is lifting! See how long it is!"

Now they could clearly see that it was indeed the monster.

"Regard the color," murmured Aronnax in awed tones. "What does it suggest to you?"

"Blood!" cried Conseil vehemently. "The blood of its victims!"

As though Aronnax had not heard the other's hysterical outburst, he continued quietly:

"It is rust, of course. And that which we thought were its teeth—so peculiarly placed between its eyes—are they not mechanical-looking? Like a ratchet contrivance? And what we thought were eyes—these are windows, are they not? No, my friend, this is no monster. Or, that is to say, it is a man-made monster—a most wondrous ship that can perform miracles of seamanship!"

"Then it is a pirate craft, and we are no better off for it!" Conseil blubbered. "I, for one, would rather leap into the sea and have it over with than be tortured by its unholy crew. Surely those who direct it must themselves be monsters of some sort."

Aronnax was still bemused with his own analysis of the thing.

"It is not unlike a certain type of American warship which exposes very little of itself above the waterline. Monitors, they are called. Yet I see no smokestack."

"And you are forgetting that we saw it pass completely under our ship at a great depth. That, no monitor could do!"

There was both excitement and admiration in his tone as Aronnax cried, "Then we are looking at an age-old dream come true! That which man has so long tried to create lies there before our eyes. This is a craft capable of navigating beneath the surface of the seas. This—be it good or evil—is the first sub-marine vessel!"

Dramatically now the mist vanished and they could see the strange ship in all its sinister outline. They had drifted quite close to it by this time—near enough to see the individual plates of which it was constructed and the rows of rivets which held them together. It lay quietly in the water, almost submerged, with the little wavelets rippling against it—like a drowsing beast.

"I see no sign of life," said Aronnax. "Whatever force propels it, it is not at the moment in operation. Conseil, I tell you I cannot help myself. I must land upon it and examine it more closely, for this is surely one of the modern wonders of the world."

Conseil was pale with dread.

"That devilish contraption! What kind of beings could have fashioned it? It makes my blood run cold to think of them!"

"They must have been *human* beings," Aronnax answered quietly. "You cannot think it fashioned by a race of deep-sea devils. That is unthinkable. Rather do I lean to

the theory that this may be the secret project of one of the great Powers—one whose name I need not mention, since you know it only too well. Certainly it is evident that those who created this ship were possessed of a genius and technical skill far surpassing anything now known to our own scientists."

"No, no," persisted Conseil. "It is simply not of this world."

"Come, come, my friend," said Aronnax, as though to soothe his agitated companion. Then he continued, more solemnly: "I tell you I must examine this ship more closely. I must try to pierce this mystery."

"It is a mystery that I have not the slightest desire to unravel." Conseil's pudgy lips were set in a stubborn pout. "I would as soon investigate the horrors of Gehenna or have a personal interview with Mephisto himself!"

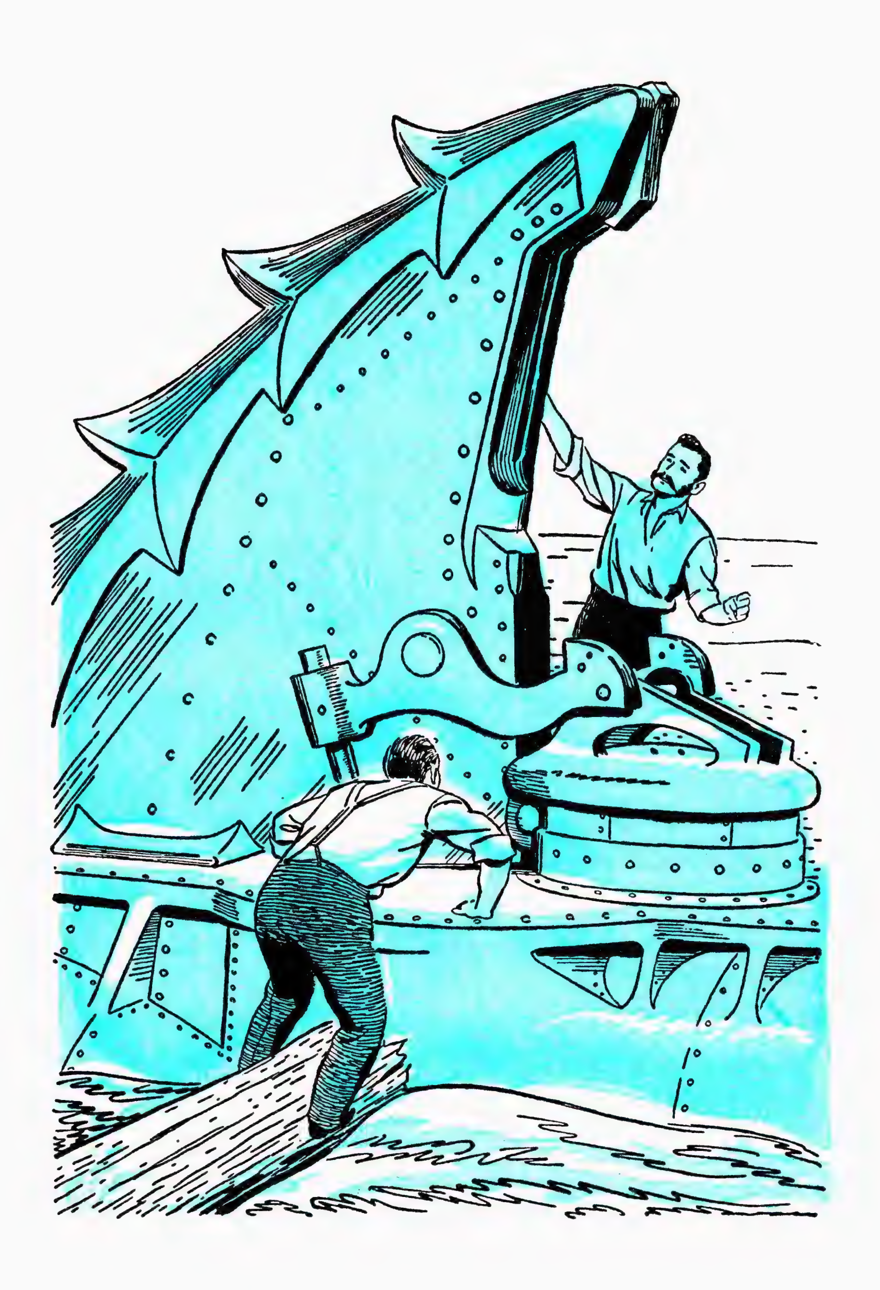
"Well, friend," Aronnax replied, with a twinkle in his eye, "it is either the devil or the deep blue sea now, for here we are—hard against the very side of this engine."

He showed absolutely no hesitation or fear as he edged himself forward on the spar and, grasping a projecting ridge on the hull of the submersible, he scrambled awkwardly aboard. With a wild look, as though he were being led to the guillotine, Conseil reluctantly followed him.

Aronnax was already tapping the deck with his feet.

"Iron plates and rivets—just as I thought! And most professionally joined, if I am any judge."

He was lost in wonderment as he approached the con-



ning tower and peered through the thick glass plate at the back of it. He shaded his face with his hands to keep out the glare, for the sun was now burning brightly through the fog. He shook his head in utter amazement at the mechanical marvels that met his eyes.

"A miracle . . . inconceivable . . . an engineering masterpiece. Conseil, you must see this," he called over his shoulder.

Conseil advanced cautiously and joined the professor at the window. He, too, was amazed by what he saw. However, he clung stubbornly to his theory that this was not a creation of earthly beings.

"No scientist or engineer on earth could have built this," was his positive comment.

Instead of answering him, Aronnax stepped back from the window with a puzzled expression on his face.

"Listen!" he whispered. "That sound—what is it?"

Conseil tilted his head.

"I hear a rhythmic sound," he answered at last, "like *breathing!*"

The professor turned. "It is coming from there." He pointed and hurried over to investigate, Conseil again following reluctantly but dutifully.

"Breathing," said Aronnax in admiration. "That is exactly what the ship is doing. It has been submerged and is now replenishing its air supply."

He indicated a row of open flaps facing aft on the deck. It was from these flaps that the steady, regular, sighing

sound was coming. It was evident that in their normal position they were closed so as to present a watertight surface when submerging.

"At least these malign creatures need air to breathe like human beings," was Conseil's comment.

Now Aronnax saw an open hatchway behind the breathing fins. Hastening over to investigate it, they saw a steep spiral staircase descending into the depths of the ship. The professor looked at Conseil questioningly.

"No!" exclaimed Conseil, drawing back. But even as he did so, he knew his objection was useless. Aronnax's eyes were bright with eagerness.

In an attempt to reassure his timid assistant, the professor cupped his hands and called down into the hatchway:

"Hello. . . . Is anyone down there?"

His voice echoed hollowly in the chamber below. He waited briefly for an answer and then called again.

He looked at Conseil, who was now thoroughly alarmed, and shrugged. "You see, it appears to be deserted."

"I think we are asking for trouble. Why don't we just wait a bit?" Conseil pleaded. "It feels safer somehow in open air."

Aronnax shook his head at him. "Do not deceive yourself. There is no safety anywhere here. If we are in the hands of fiends or pirates the sooner we find out the better. Come, let us descend, for in spite of all I confess I am consumed with curiosity. I must know more of this strange ship."

He resolutely placed his feet upon the first step and then

without further hesitation made his way down to the first landing. Conseil had no choice but to follow.

"This must be the chart room," said Aronnax looking about him at the maps and other navigating equipment lining the room. Conseil nodded, his eyes bulging with apprehension.

The professor turned his full attention to a close inspection of the chart room. The first thing he noticed was the brilliant light filling the room. This light came from several bright glowing balls held in iron brackets of elaborate design.

"It is absolutely as bright as day in here, and it is neither an oil nor a gas flame that is casting that wonderful illumination."

He studied the glowing orbs. More and more he was impressed with what he saw.

"There is certainly great genius behind all this," he marveled.

"Great evil," Conseil grumbled. "This is an engine of destruction. You are forgetting that. But," he added reluctantly, "it *is* breath-taking. That I cannot deny."

Like a delighted child on Christmas morning, the professor's attention flew from one detail to another.

"Those spiral stairs. Where do they lead? . . . That intricate panel with its flashing lights . . . what does it indicate? And all those dials and wheels? See how cleverly they have constructed the interior!"

He was now concentrating on the control panel. A large

indicator with its needle inching toward its outer edge held his rapt attention. He read the lettering on it aloud—"Reserve Air."

"I must know the creators of all this," he cried finally, and walked swiftly to a door opening on to a corridor that apparently ran the length of the vessel.

"Hello!" he called. "Are you there?" His voice echoed and rumbled metallically and Conseil winced.

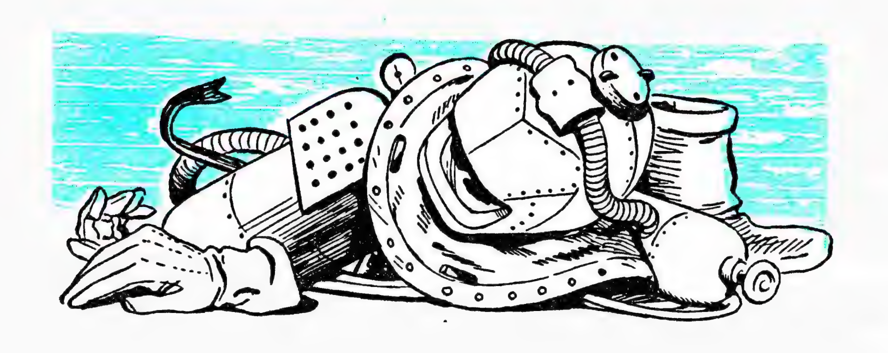
From somewhere in the distance came an answering call which was not an echo. "Ahoy there! Is anybody aboard?"

Conseil's face became even paler, his eyes wider. He dashed to the stairs and began to run up toward the deck.

"They are outside," he cried in fear. "We are trapped!"

"No, no," replied the professor soothingly. "It came from this direction." He pointed aft and stepped down the short passageway toward a beautifully brocaded curtain that separated it from the room beyond.

Again the distant muffled voice called out, repeating its question. Professor Aronnax pushed aside the heavy curtain and gazed through the opening unbelievingly.



CHAPTER 6

Iron Men!

Conseil, meanwhile, floundered up the iron staircase and fairly burst on to the deck. His knees almost gave way from sheer relief when he saw—not a devil with scales instead of skin and green seaweed for hair—but Ned Land, sitting astride his overturned longboat. His relief, in fact, almost completely overshadowed what surprise he may have felt at this remarkable sight.

"Le bon Dieu have mercy," called Conseil, weakly, to Ned. "Where did you come from?"

"Let me ask you the same question," cried the harpooner, "and add one of my own. What are you doing aboard this monster? Or whatever it is?"

Somehow the arrival of Ned gave Conseil new strength. The physical courage and capability of the man offered some hope of coping with the crew of this sinister vessel, should they now appear.

"Is it safe to come aboard?" Ned called. "What have you found?"

Conseil's assurance that there was evidently no one else aboard, plus the information that Professor Aronnax was below exploring its wonders, removed any reluctance Ned might have felt in coming alongside. With his single oar, he now maneuvered his capsized craft closer to the submersible. During this time, the two men exchanged brief accounts of their adventures since the monster and the *Abraham Lincoln* had met the night before.

"This thing may be deserted now," muttered Ned, when he finally stood on the deck of the craft beside Conseil, "but I have a strange feeling it won't be for long. I ain't hankering much to meet the crew of this ungodly craft. You know," he continued thoughtfully, "on second thought, I'd just as soon take my chances in the clean open sea—if it's all the same with you." He looked questioningly at the anxious little Frenchman.

"Those are my sentiments exactly," Conseil burst out with relief. "I'll go right down and get the professor!"

"Bear a hand with me first," said the harpooner, indicating his longboat. "We've got to flop this skiff over, then we'll be ready to shove off. And the quicker the better, says I."

Conseil's contribution to the effort was negligible. Almost singlehanded Ned hauled, tilted, and manhandled the heavy boat into its proper floating position and tied the painter to an iron stanchion on the deck. Again Conseil felt a returning glow of courage as he watched Ned exert his remarkable strength.

They had barely finished their task, when a sudden, sharp, metallic, scraping sound made them both turn around. They saw the open breathing fins slowly shutting of their own accord. These had no sooner flattened themselves flush with the deck when, without warning, the main hatch through which Conseil and Aronnax had entered the ship snapped shut with a loud clang.

"What devil's work is this?" shouted Ned and sprang to the tightly closed iron cover. He grasped at a handle and tugged furiously. The veins stood out upon his strong neck and his biceps bulged, but the closed hatch did not budge.

"We've got to get him out!" Conseil was frantically straining at another handle. He was beside himself with concern for his friend, but the futility of their efforts was all too apparent. He looked about him wildly.

"There must be another way in," he cried.

"Maybe aft," Ned grunted as he gave one last vicious tug.

Conseil nodded jerkily and started for the tail of the vessel ahead of his companion.

"Wait! Here's my harpoon!" called Ned, who was only a few paces behind the hurrying Frenchman. He disentangled the rope which had snarled in one of the low railings that ran along the hull and looked down at his weapon with great satisfaction. "I've found my iron. Ha! Technically I *did* spear the monster!"

Meanwhile Conseil had run past the dorsal fin of the submersible and was standing pointing downward.

"There's another door here," he called. "Come and help me open it."

Ned was beside him in a moment. This time their efforts were rewarded. The cover opened quite easily and Conseil immediately put his head down into it, calling anxiously, "Professor! Can you hear me?"

"Wait a minute!" Ned Land pulled him back. "How do you know this one won't fly shut like the other one back there?" He picked up his harpoon again and wedged it firmly against the open hatch cover. "There'll be no magic tricks with this one now," he gritted. "Come on, let's go."

Seeing that Conseil hesitated, Ned shouldered his way past him and started down the winding stairs exposed below.

"Come on, we've got to get the professor out of there."

Conseil peered down after the harpooner, his face once more filled with anxious fear. Finally muttering, "Yes, yes," he followed the other down.

The two men found themselves descending a hollow cylindrical chamber, heavily riveted on all sides. They came to a landing which was evidently a deck, and stepped away from the stairs which continued on down to another deck below. Behind them was a door bearing the word "Galley."

"Blow me down!" exclaimed Ned. "It's just like a regular ship. I could do with a bit of chow."

He pushed open the door, disclosing a ship's galley with a large cooking range and rows of burnished copper

pots hanging from the walls. There was also a sink with a pump for water. This latter claimed Ned's attention. He picked up a tin cup and helped himself noisily to a drink while Conseil stood watching, torn between his thirst and his fear that there might be something not quite right about the water. He refused the cupful that Ned offered him with a murmured apology about hurrying up to find the professor.

"I had better fill a beaker and grab some of these vittles. Got to have a little something to gnaw on when we're in that open boat."

"Yes," said Conseil, "you get some things together and I will go forward to find the professor." Full of misgivings, he turned and recrossed the stair landing to proceed along the dim corridor.

"Professor! Are you there?" he called, and his voice echoed mournfully.

He shuddered at the cryptlike sound of it and hastened toward a curtain which was similar to the one before which he had left the professor standing. He was correct in thinking that he was at the opposite entrance of the same room, for he now heard Aronnax's voice coming from it.

"Here I am," called Aronnax softly.

Conseil thrust aside the hanging and stepped into the room beyond. He hurried over to the professor and held out his hand.

"What a relief! I thought I would never see you again," he cried. Nor did the wonders of that miraculous room then

impress themselves upon his mind, so overjoyed was he at seeing his friend safe.

The professor took his hand and responded with a warm pressure, but his face was turned toward a large circular glass window, from which came an eerie greenish illumination. Looking over his friend's shoulder, Conseil realized with a shock that he was looking out into the very depths of the sea. He gasped involuntarily as he saw a number of strange figures moving slowly about, less than fifty feet from the vessel.

"There they are," he said, almost choking with emotion. "They *are* devils! They have no human faces on those monstrous metallic heads. And their backs—they are composed of machinery! Alas! We are lost! We can do nothing against such creatures as these."

Aronnax put his hand upon his friend's arm.

"Compose yourself," he said. "You are looking at a further miracle. There are men inside those hideous exteriors—men who must be very much like you and me."

Conseil looked at him in disbelief. "How can you be sure?"

"They are subject to the natural pressure and hindrance of the water. See how slowly they walk? How unnaturally? That means they are not at home in that element. Yet these astounding people have worked out the secret of personal submergence as they did that of their wonderful vessel."

Conseil's bulging eyes were concentrating on the scene outside the viewport.

"But what are they doing?" he asked. "It is almost as though—" He shook his head. "No, no, that is impossible."

"You are on the right track," said Aronnax seriously. "We are observing an underwater funeral. I have been watching them from the moment I came in here. I saw them proceed from beneath this craft in solemn procession. They bore one of their number upon their shoulders. I watched as they prepared a grave in the coral with their axes and placed the body within it. You can see the mound of coral under which it lies. And see—that one—the tallest of them all—he is holding a cross of blood-red coral to place on the grave."

As he spoke, the tall figure did indeed begin to wedge the ruby cross firmly into the head of the mound. As he did this, the others knelt, and when he had finished he, too, knelt with them as if in prayer.

"Ah!" breathed Conseil, in relief, "they are God-fearing men." In the next breath, he exclaimed violently, "But what kind of contradiction is this? Have they not committed murder with complete *sang-froid?* We have seen them do it. No! They cannot be trusted! Let us leave!"

Quickly, he told the news of Ned Land's arrival and of their plans for escape in the longboat. As he spoke, Ned's voice interrupted from the corridor. "Hey, mate! Where are you?" And the next minute the harpooner jerked aside the curtain and came striding across the salon toward the two men.

"Blow me down!" he cried, wringing the professor's



hand in exuberant and sincere pleasure. He held up a gunny sack bulging with supplies he had picked up in the galley. "And there's a cannister of water out there on the landing—so let's shove off," he added.

He gave only a cursory glance at the viewport, and taking it for granted that his friends would follow, he hurried back to the corridor like a true man of action.

"Come," said Conseil beseechingly to the professor. "Let us not hesitate. We do not have much time. Already they are getting to their feet down there and if we do not hurry we will be caught."

Aronnax reluctantly allowed himself to be led from the window, his eyes greedily drinking in every detail of the room. When the two men emerged upon the deck, they found Ned Land already holding the longboat alongside the hull of the submarine.

"Lively, mates," he urged.

"You have the water and food supplies?" asked Conseil anxiously as he prepared to assist the professor down into the wallowing longboat.

"Aye, aye!" was Ned's hearty rejoinder. "And I have my trusty harpoon, too. When we get hungry, we'll spear us a whale or two."

It was not easy for landlubbers like Aronnax and Conseil to board the longboat, and some precious time was lost in waiting for the shifting craft to get into a safe position. Finally all three of the castaways were safely stowed aboard and Ned yanked the stern painter loose.

"Shove off, lads," he called, and picked up the oar. With powerful strokes, he propelled the skiff away from the side of the submersible. Standing in the stern, he peered down into the clear water below. He froze in the middle of a stroke.

"Jittering jellyfish!" he exclaimed. "I can see them down there! They're coming up after us!" He swung back his oar. "Stand back, and I'll bash their ugly heads in!"

A weird sight now greeted the fugitives. One by one the rounded metal heads of the strange beings broke the surface of the water surrounding the longboat, and, grasping the gunwhales, began to propel it back toward the submersible.

They met with furious opposition from Ned, who promptly fell upon them with his oar. But his oar soon splintered and none of his tremendous blows seemed to have any effect on his opponents.

"The cursed fiends *are* made of iron," Ned swore. Throwing aside his shattered oar, he reached for his harpoon. At that moment he was seized around the legs from behind and thrown heavily to the bottom of the boat. Two of the underwater men had climbed clumsily aboard to restrain the whaler, who struggled furiously. Aronnax and Conseil sat by helplessly watching their comrade in his losing fight.

The longboat was finally warped back to the side of the submersible. Blue-uniformed figures swarmed up from below decks, having divested themselves of their diving gear first.

Even this reinforcement might not have succeeded in quelling the fighting spirit of the raging harpooner if he had not inadvertently knocked his head against the iron helmet of one of the divers. He collapsed suddenly with a groan and lay sprawled motionless. A trickle of blood spread slowly from his swelling wound.

"Attention!" barked one of the blue-uniformed crewmen to the two Frenchmen. He was obviously an officer. "Get out of that boat and come aboard," he ordered.

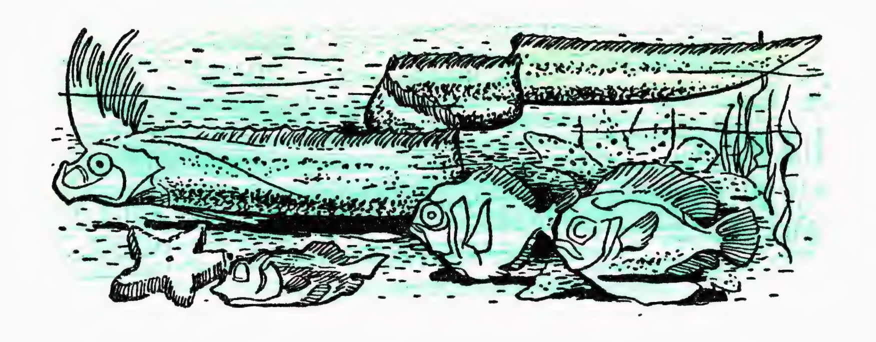
Aronnax and Conseil obeyed hastily. The professor looked back anxiously at their fallen comrade. "What of him?" he asked.

"You'll all be taken down below to our commander," answered the officer curtly, and motioned to his men to pick up Ned, who was already stirring into consciousness. Two crewmen helped him to his feet. He was unsteady and all the fight had gone out of him, as they led him toward the hatchway. Conseil and Aronnax were pushed in the same direction.

Although Conseil was by now completely convinced that they were involved with human beings rather than inhuman monsters, the cold, businesslike behavior of the strange sailors filled him with apprehension. It was only too evident that they were not among friends.

Thus once more the trio entered the submarine. This time they knew they were to stand before the one whose great brain had conceived and brought about all the wonders they had seen. But they also knew they were going

before him to be judged. Aronnax, the scientist and thinker, went down with a spirit of optimism. He felt such a great intellect must be, as it generally is, connected with a great humanitarianism. Conseil, the lesser man, went slowly and with deep pessimism. He felt he was going to his death.



CHAPTER 7

Condemned to Death

Once more in the chart room, the captives did not have long to wait. The sound of footsteps upon the circular staircase caused an electric stir among the crewmen of the submarine.

"The captain is coming," announced one who spoke with a slight middle-European accent. He motioned for all to stand back.

As the three prisoners watched with strained white faces, the master of the ship and of their fate came deliberately up the stairs and stood before them. They saw a tall man, dressed in dark blue naval uniform which, while traditional, was not of any particular nation. Certain original touches of design and insignia made it distinctive. Their eyes were held by his arresting face; a tanned face that could well be called handsome in a saturnine way. Black curling hair and a well-trimmed beard framed his regular features. A pair of burning brown eyes regarded them sternly from under frowning brows.

He gave his prisoners a few seconds of swift appraisal and then he spoke in cold clipped tones. His voice was vibrant and deep and he spoke perfect English. He addressed himself only to Aronnax.

"You are from the warship that tried to sink me, are you not?" he asked.

"Yes, we are from the *Abraham Lincoln,*" answered the professor quietly. "Those on the ship thought they were firing at a sea monster. They had no idea that this was a craft of human design."

The captain ignored the explanation. Including them all in a sweeping glance, he said curtly, "Who are you?"

Aronnax, continuing his role as spokesman, answered for his mates:

"This is Ned Land, master harpooner. This is *Monsieur* Conseil, my assistant. I am Professor Antoine Aronnax of the Paris National Museum. At your service, Captain . . .?"

"Captain Nemo of the submarine *Nautilus,*" offered the master coolly, and he inclined his head ever so slightly. "Professor Aronnax? I've heard of you. I've read your books."

On his part, Aronnax gave a little smile and also bowed his head, only to snap it back up in a hurried jerk as Nemo said curtly, "Only you may remain on this ship."

Conseil gasped and even Ned Land betrayed his surprise.

"What do you mean?" Aronnax demanded.

Captain Nemo's face hardened as he answered in forbidding tones, "Fortunately for you, Professor, your background and scientific standing separate you from your

companions in crime. You will be saved but they shall be made to pay."

He pointed a long finger toward Conseil and Ned.

"Take them on deck," he commanded fiercely. "Follow the usual procedure."

Ned Land strained in the grip of his captors but they had him well in hand. He cursed them under his breath and glared vengefully at Nemo.

"On deck?" Conseil repeated in anguished tones. "What are you going to do with us?"

Captain Nemo's voice was pitiless. "You came as an enemy to destroy me—now I shall destroy you. Fortunes of war, *monsieur*." He shrugged and made a signal to his men to carry out his orders.

"Wait," cried Aronnax. "You know that is not true. They—we—meant you no harm."

"It is not our fault the warship fired on you," Conseil pleaded.

"Surely we are all entitled to a fair trial, are we not?" added Aronnax.

"Trial?" Captain Nemo's dark eyes snapped. "You have had your trial! I am judge and jury on this ship and I have given my verdict. The sea brought you and the sea shall take you back!"

"That's fair enough," cried Ned. "Just what we wanted in the first place! I for one won't fret myself, pining for your company. I'm ready to get off this rusty fish right now and take my chances."



"Yes, yes," agreed Conseil. He was still shaking and wet with perspiration, but grinning now like an oriental idol. "Thank you, thank you," he simpered, and made a move as though to kiss Nemo's hand in gratitude. "If you will only allow Professor Aronnax to come with us, we will leave at once."

"Sure!" said Ned heartily. "Give us back our boat and a supply of water and provisions and the sight of us won't offend you no longer, mister . . . providing you let the professor get off, too, of course."

A cruel spark of amusement kindled in the captain's eyes.

"You misunderstand me," he said deliberately. "I said nothing about a boat . . . or provisions."

Aronnax made a movement of horror. "You mean to drown them—wilfully?" he cried. "How can you even think of doing this? It is not civilized! It is monstrous—unthinkable!"

But the captain replied implacably: "Professor Aronnax, since we are destined to spend much time together, you may as well understand one thing; *I am not a civilized man.* Therefore I follow none of your so-called civilized laws."

He deliberately turned his back and walked away into the main salon. Aronnax followed him, his voice earnest, to continue his pleading.

"I am technically as guilty as they are, for we all enlisted on this expedition to destroy what we thought was a dangerous and frightful sea monster of some sort. But why call it 'guilt' when all the rest of the world, too, believes it's being

threatened by an unnatural beast and wishes to destroy it?"

In an alcove of the salon, which served as a library, Nemo halted and turned to face him. His face was unrelenting as he said shortly, "In my opinion that is guilt enough."

There was such a dangerous note in the voice that uttered this judgment that the professor was constrained to hold his tongue for the moment. Nemo looked down at him with his piercing eyes, challenging further comment. Since Aronnax did not reply, the captain turned and took a book from the well-filled shelves behind him. Aronnax recognized it as one of his own works.

As Nemo flipped the pages impatiently, he started to speak once more.

"Your book is almost brilliant," he said, "but to me it is incomplete. You were tied to dry land when you wrote it. You have much, much to learn." He tossed the book aside and continued: "The true story of the ocean depths begins where you left off. I speak of wonders that I cannot find words to describe . . . wonders that are now mine alone." He gave Aronnax a long and steady look. "I would be willing to share these marvels with a man of—let us say—your mental attainments."

There was something almost wistful in this last statement. Aronnax found himself tempted to reverse his judgment about this strange man, until the thought of his ruthlessness toward Conseil and Ned Land made him reply indignantly, "At the expense of the lives of my companions? What in heaven's name do you take me for?"

Whatever slight touch of softness had come into Captain Nemo's eyes now receded into the black depths of unfriendliness which was their natural condition. He shrugged indifferently and said, "You must choose between them and me. It is either life . . . or death. You are the first to whom I have ever offered this choice."

A cold feeling of hopelessness came over Aronnax. He knew what his answer must be. Yet life was sweet. To him Science had always been a vision of pure delight—a goddess whom he had followed eagerly. To give it all up . . . to die . . . . He shuddered.

The shock of having to make such a dreadful choice numbed his sensibilities and like a man in a dream he answered slowly, "I cannot accept your offer."

Perhaps Captain Nemo's hesitation before uttering the fatal order was a last lingering touch of humanity. If it was, it lasted but an instant. He called through the curtain:

"Take the professor up with the others and secure for sea," he ordered.

One of the crewmen stepped into the salon and took the professor's arm. As in a trance, Aronnax allowed himself to be led out of the room and up the iron steps to the deck. Looking aft, he could see Ned Land and Conseil standing alone by the dorsal fin of the submarine. The crewman who had led him there gave Aronnax a little shove in the direction of his companions and then quickly turned and disappeared down the hatchway, clanging the cover shut behind him.

The professor looked dully back toward the barred avenue of safety and life. Then he walked unevenly toward his friends. He could feel the ship coming to life beneath his feet as he went slowly aft to share their fate.

Far to the aft of the submarine, about a quarter of a mile distant, a small white object bobbed up and down on the waves. It was the longboat—hopelessly beyond their reach.

Captain Nemo came briskly up the stairs from the chart room. The men in the control room looked at him expectantly, awaiting his further orders. Before he gave them, he turned and looked through the square window that faced aft. His three intended victims were grouped around the dorsal fin and seemed in earnest consultation. One or the other looked back at the distant longboat occasionally. Quite evidently they were discussing the feasibility of trying to swim out to it, but the professor's head-shakes and Conseil's doleful expression clearly indicated they felt this to be impossible.

Nemo turned to the men standing by at the various control levers and wheels.

"All stations ready," he said mechanically. "Prepare for diving." His eyes swept the dials. "Ahead slow, helmsman."

The man repeated the order: "Aye, sir, slow ahead!"

All of the men involved in the maneuver obeyed mechanically. If they were committing murder, it was in line of duty and the act in no wise seemed to affect them. Yet they did not look like vicious cold-blooded killers.

There came a hissing sound as one of the crewmen threw his weight against a large lever and pushed it to its extreme position. Bells jangled. Lights blinked on the control panels as the dials began to register. A scarcely perceptible vibration was felt throughout the ship. The submarine was getting under way.

Captain Nemo left the command post before the two round front windows and walked to the rear of the control room. White streamers of foam creamed alongside of his vessel and the propeller churned furiously. He calmly folded his arms on his chest. His dark brooding eyes sought his victims. His mouth was set.

Nor did his expression change at all when Ned Land shook his fist at him and mouthed unintelligible words whose meaning was all too clear. Without turning, he gave another crisp command:

"Trim your forward ballast!"

One of the crewmen pulled a bank of levers and a pointer on the dial crept to "Diving Position." The ballast tank indicator began to fill with bubbles as a slight forward cant was now felt in the deck.

Outside, the reaction to the dive was more immediate. The water charging along the deck plates began to splash around the feet of the three doomed men.

Nemo's eyes brightened. He turned now to study the dials and then snapped, "Three degrees down!"

In response, the levers were jammed further over. A solid wave crashed past the front windows of the submarine.

Behind the control room, the sea leaped along the deck, as the captives tightened their holds on the dorsal fin.

The *Nautilus* was bounding into the waves now. Spray cascaded over the top of the chart room and water streamed down the rear viewport, obscuring Captain Nemo's vision. He again consulted the dials.

"Ballast aft. Hold her steady."

The deck leveled out. Captain Nemo peered through the window, drumming his fingers on the metal sill. His victims were now almost waist-deep in hurtling water. Anxiously he studied Aronnax's face for some sign of weakness, but all he read there was the professor's grim determination to go down with his friends.

As the craft skimmed the waves, a green wall of water rushed past, burying the three men. When it had swept out into the wake of the ship, it had taken Conseil along with it. Only Ned Land and the professor were left, desperately clinging to the fin. It did not seem possible for them to hold on much longer. Surely the next wave would carry them away, too.

Captain Nemo turned from the viewport. A half smile of satisfaction twitched at the corners of his mouth.

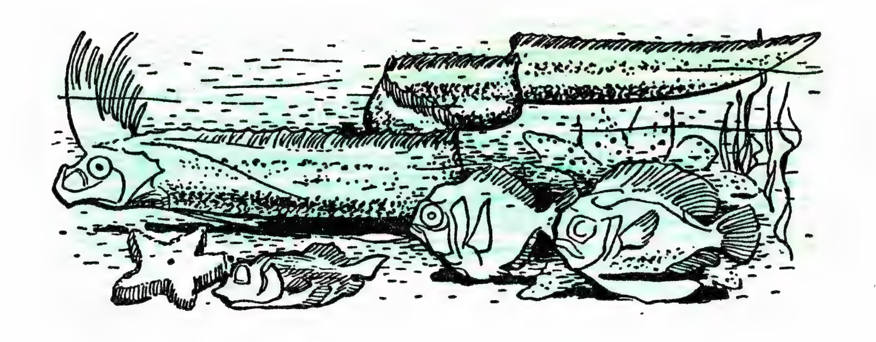
"All engines stop," he ordered tersely.

The crewman manning the controls obeyed mechanically and impersonally. The second in command now came up from below to get his orders.

"Launch the skiff and pick up that man in the water," ordered the captain.

"Aye, aye, sir." The mate saluted. "What about the other two?"

"I think they've had about enough. Take them all below and confine them to quarters." To the mate's inquiring look, he answered meaningfully, "I have found out what I needed to know."



CHAPTER 8

At the Captain's Table

It was the dinner hour on the submarine *Nautilus*. The salon, which was the principal room of the vessel, presented a warm and cozy aspect that could well be mistaken for the comfort and luxury of a wealthy man's mansion ashore. A soft glow that came from cleverly concealed lights filled every corner and revealed the tasteful furnishings. Paintings by artists of international repute graced the walls. Heavy velvet hangings of a lush ruby color framed the entrances at either end of the long chamber and were drawn over the side viewports, which were now closed.

Two long divans of victorian design, upholstered in brocaded red, faced these viewports so that one might sit in complete comfort as in a drawing room and gaze out into the wonders of the deep. Covering the floor from wall to wall was a thick oriental rug.

At the forward end of the room was a beautifully ornamented and gilded fountain from which tinkled a small jet of fresh water, illuminated from below. At the opposite

end stood the crowning glory of this undersea living room —a full-sized organ.

The table had been set in the center of the room, between the viewports. It, too, was the last word in luxury and good taste. No detail that could contribute to gracious living was omitted.

Seated now at this gleaming table was Captain Nemo. A crewman acting as steward was attentively giving last minute touches to the napery, although there was nothing servile in this man's ministrations.

Both he and Captain Nemo looked up as a barking sound came from behind the curtain at the forward end of the room. In the next instant, a half-grown seal came in, flapping its way joyously across the chamber to stop by its master's chair. It barked loudly, clamoring for attention and food. Captain Nemo dropped a morsel into the animal's mouth from one of the steaming bowls that crowded the table. Then, having patted the seal briefly on its shining head, the captain dipped his fingers into a bowl of water which the steward held ready for him and wiped them fastidiously upon his napkin.

Now the velvet curtains at the end of the room parted, and the professor and his companions entered, escorted by a sailor. The captain watched them as they looked around, obviously impressed by the splendor around them. Although they were not seeing it for the first time, they were seeing it at its best.

"I notice you have been outfitted with some of our spare



uniforms," said Captain Nemo. "Well, then, come in and be seated at my table." He nodded to the steward. "You may serve them, Carl."

While the latter went to the sideboard to fill his serving tray, the captives took their places at the table. Aronnax and Conseil murmured dutiful thank-yous but Ned Land remained unappeased and gave Nemo an unfriendly glare as he took his seat.

As Aronnax unfolded his fine linen napkin he felt constrained to say, "I would like to express our collective gratitude, sir. We are thankful to be still alive."

Nemo inclined his head without any warmth in the expression or gesture.

"Let us devote all our thoughts to the pleasant subject immediately at hand—the dinner," he said. "For to dine well and gracefully is one of the few satisfactory experiences in life."

"Especially when you haven't done it for a spell," muttered Ned under his breath.

They sat in uncomfortable silence while the steward filled their plates. Captain Nemo had finished his dessert. He leaned back with his bearded chin sunk on his chest and appeared to be in a deep fit of brooding. While the others ate, he seemed to be completely oblivious of their presence. He gave them the impression of a man who was accustomed to being much alone with unhappy thoughts.

Conseil broke the silence after he had gotten well into the heaped contents of his plate. He turned to the profes-

sor, a gratified look in his prominent eyes.

"My word, this food is delicious! Don't you think so, Professor?"

To which Aronnax sincerely replied, "Indeed, yes! I cannot remember when I have tasted better."

"Passable grub, all right," mumbled Ned as he shoveled the food into his mouth with his knife. "I was near starved, I tell you." He was beginning to thaw out.

The brief flurry of table conversation recalled Captain Nemo to the present. He looked with disapproval at Ned's forecastle table manners.

"There is a fork on your right, Mr. Land. Or aren't you accustomed to using one?"

Ned stopped his loaded knife in transit. He replied arrogantly, "I'm indifferent to them." Food was restoring his usual cocky spirit.

Aronnax threw him a warning glance.

Then, to cover up for his companion, he said hastily, "May I ask how you are able to set such a magnificent table, Captain?"

It was a fortunate choice of a topic. Evidently Captain Nemo was very interested in the problems involved in providing food under difficult conditions. His brooding look was gone when he answered. "It may interest you to know, Professor, that these dishes come entirely from my ocean farms. There is not one thing on this table that is from the earth."

"Truly remarkable," Aronnax agreed. He felt relieved

that he found a subject so obviously acceptable to his moody captor. "I would swear I am eating the finest veal."

"The flavor deceives you," was Nemo's prompt reply. "That is fillet of sea snake."

Aronnax's face did not betray the fact that he was extremely startled. He even managed to put the morsel that he had on his fork into his mouth and chew it with an air of appreciation. He swallowed, nodded, and said, "H-m-m-m, excellent, excellent!"

Conseil, however, was not such a master of his emotions. Had Nemo been looking at him, he would have read dismay and misery in the little man's face. He had put down his fork.

"And this—er—is perhaps—not lamb, then?" he queried weakly.

Nemo turned his attention to him. "No. It is brisket of blowfish, with sea squirt dressing. It has been basted in barnacle sauce."

Conseil gulped to keep down his nausea. He became positively green.

Again Aronnax came to the rescue and diverted the captain's attention. "I must say I am enjoying it all," he interposed quickly. "It is better than lamb."

This was true, for whatever the ingredients, everything had been prepared for the epicure. Nevertheless, some of the savor had gone out of the meal, even for the professor.

Ned Land had put down his knife with a final clatter. His face had a rather ashen tinge, too. Captain Nemo

turned toward him with a frown.

"You have finished?"

Ned gave Nemo a sick look. "Just with the main course, if it's all the same to you." Then he addressed himself to Aronnax. "Pass me the cream, will you, Professor? I'll try my hand at the pudding. Can't see how anybody could gussie that up," he grumbled.

There was a touch of amusement in Nemo's voice. "The cream, of course, is milk from the giant sperm whale." This was for Ned's benefit. Then to the professor he added, "Those delicious fruits which you may have for your dessert are actually preserves made of sea cucumbers."

Seeing Ned put down his spoon, Captain Nemo frowned at him again. "You are not eating your pudding, Mr. Land," he said sternly.

"I'm not sure it *is* pudding," replied the harpooner, as he fought down his nausea.

"Quite correct, Mr. Land," said Nemo. "This is a personal recipe of my own—sauté of unborn octopus."

It was too much for Ned. He pushed away his dessert with a muttered oath. "Blast it!" he growled. "I'm fair crawling with these creepy tidbits! And now cuttlefish!" He got to his feet. "Nothing here is fit to eat, and I don't give a hoot who knows it," he shouted.

Pushing back his chair, he took an angry step backward. The next minute, he felt himself stumbling and losing balance. He had fallen over something large, firm, and yet yielding. Flat on his back, he saw that he had stumbled

over the captain's pet seal which had taken its place behind Ned's chair while he was eating.

There was a stunned, suspenseful moment in the room as the three friends looked from the seal to Captain Nemo. But the crash and disorder attendant upon Ned's fall had not apparently upset the captain's equanimity, nor did it cause the storm of annoyance they might have expected from him. Miraculously an amused twinkle stole furtively into his dark eyes. To their surprise and relief, his lips curved ever so slightly in a smile. He seemed almost human!

After the dinner table had been cleared Conseil and Ned occupied themselves with an inspection of the room. Aronnax found himself seated on one of the roomy settees with Captain Nemo.

The latter held an open humidor to the professor. "Can I offer you a cigar?" he asked.

Aronnax murmured his thanks as he selected one. Nemo then held a small lighted brazier as the professor puffed the tip of the cigar into a rosy glow. He sat back savoring the flavor of the smoke.

"Like everything else here," he said, "it is delightful. But different somehow?"

"Justifiably," answered Nemo, taking his own cigar from his mouth and rolling it lovingly between his fingers. "It is made of seaweed."

The excellent dinner and the pleasant smoke had



put the captain in a more tractable frame of mind. Aronnax was now able to bring the conversation around to the plight of himself and his friends.

"I cannot accuse you of not making us comfortable—in the ultimate result," he ventured, and then plunged ahead. "However, I cannot help being curious about a number of things to which you hold the answers."

He had gauged his man correctly. Captain Nemo answered him quietly and without any trace of his former rancor.

"You are wondering why I saved your lives?"

"For one thing—yes."

"Because of you, Professor. I wanted to test your loyalty to your companions. Oddly enough, I may have use for that kind of misplaced loyalty and devotion."

"Misplaced?" Aronnax sounded a little shocked.

"It is important for me to know that your life was not too dear a price to pay for love of your fellow men."

This cryptic answer puzzled Aronnax all the more.

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

The professor found Captain Nemo looking at him very much as he would look at a peculiar specimen in a jar. He felt like squirming. Instead, he concentrated on his cigar.

"I do not intend that you should understand—not at the moment, that is," said Nemo with a slight return of his former coldness. "All I can tell you is that I may have use for you. I have been formulating a certain plan. . . ."

He turned in his seat and eyed Ned who was squatting

before a row of marine oddities preserved in alcohol and cunningly lighted from below.

Abruptly changing the subject and addressing himself directly to the harpooner, he said, sternly, "You are all on the strictest probation. I'd advise you—and especially you, Mr. Land—not to try to escape."

There was an uncomfortable moment of silence before Nemo spoke again. "Do you all understand your position?"

Ned straightened up and faced him now from across the room.

"I don't know," he answered fearlessly. "A prisoner has the right to try to escape, hasn't he?"

Once more Aronnax averted a storm. He tried to sound casual. "Perhaps we are part prisoner—part guest?"

"A very fortunate compromise, Professor," said Nemo almost admiringly. He settled himself once more to continue his conversation with this man for whom he already felt a deep respect.

"What else do you wish to know?" he asked.

"What of the *Abraham Lincoln?* What happened to her?"

"As far as I know, she is still afloat. Your captain was a very competent man. I admire such competence in people. His last maneuver saved him. We were not able to strike his ship a crippling blow."

"I thank *le bon Dieu* for that," sighed Aronnax with great relief. "Then you did not attack him again—after the second charge?"

"No, we did not. Circumstances prevented. There was a fatality aboard my ship. One of my most valuable assistants—and my great friend—died."

"Not the bombardment?" Aronnax felt a sense of guilt. No wonder Captain Nemo was so unfriendly to them!

"Not entirely," Nemo answered. His eyes were veiled. "Bertholi was not a well man—not since his terrible experiences in the labor camps. I had been expecting it for some time. Actually the shock of our ramming your frigate may have hastened the end—his life was ebbing fast."

"I am very sorry," said Aronnax sincerely. "I presume his was the funeral procession we saw from your window this morning?"

Nemo nodded absently. "He was a great man—a genius with a phenomenal knowledge of physics and electricity—far beyond that of his time. I shall miss him." He sighed heavily as he looked about him. "Much of him is in this vessel."

"I know the names of all the leading scientists of the world. I do not recall one by the name of Bertholi."

"That is not his true name," Nemo said, almost fiercely. "He was driven from his native land by evil forces that would not tolerate his liberality. For the sake of his family, he gave up his name and deserted the world. He chose to cast his lot with me." He stopped suddenly and looked at Aronnax fixedly. "I am telling you too much."

Aronnax had discovered how to switch out of dangerous channels. It never failed to please the captain to speak of

his undersea vessel with appreciation.

"I don't know where to begin to ask you questions about this wonderful ship," the professor broke in smoothly, indicating his surroundings with his cigar. "Your art treasures —your rare books—that magnificent pipe organ; all these things are so miraculous in this milieu! But what small miracles even they are compared to the mechanics of the vessel which contains them!"

Nemo appeared mollified. He leaned back quietly again and smoked his cigar, soothed by the professor's admiration.

"Actually, I can still scarcely believe it. I feel I am experiencing a dream. How could you—how could anyone—conceive and build such a craft as this, and in a single stroke harness power which is still only a scientific mirage to the outside world?"

Captain Nemo nodded. He seemed eager to enter into a scientific discussion with his companion.

"You are quite right about my ship. It is of the future!" There was scorn in his voice as he continued: "Wheatstone, Varley, Seamens, and the American man, Farmer! Mere dabblers! What have they accomplished in the field of electricity? Bah! Nothing!"

"I notice that you avoid mentioning Pacinotti. Has he not invented a successful continuous-current dynamo?"

Nemo was still scornful. "Bah!" he repeated, and flicked the ash from his cigar forcefully into a cut-glass ash tray. "What can he do with it? He has no reliable source of power. And the primary battery is very weak—completely

unreliable. He cannot brush his boots with it!"

Aronnax turned to look at the captain's strong, bearded profile. He dared to ask, "Have you, then, found that of which men of science have dreamed for ages?"

Nemo sat up and turned to face him. His eyes burned with a fanatical light as he leaned forward and answered dramatically, "Yes! Yes! I have!"

Aronnax felt his heart suddenly racing in his chest. Never had he known such a tingling moment! Was this man mad? Or had he indeed succeeded where so many of the world's greatest minds had failed? The evidence before the professor was all in favor of the strange man who now stared so fixedly at him with dark feverish eyes. His vessel really worked. It propelled itself without steam or boilers or any other known means of navigation. It submerged at will and survived for indefinite periods in that strange element, the sea. Those lights which illuminated the room without flame or smoke, were they the culmination, the end result, of the pitiful experiments of Sir Humphry Davy back in 1802? Was electricity at long last the slave of man —this man?

And was it electricity alone? Or was it some other force as well? . . . one that had beguiled the thoughts of dreamers since the Greeks had coined the word *atom*?

Lost in the stupendous possibilities that lay in the answers to these questions, he said in awe, "Such a secret would mean the rise of a new era. It would revolutionize the entire world!"

"Or destroy it!" Nemo's harsh and angry termination to his spoken thoughts shocked the professor out of his fantastic reverie. "Can you imagine what would happen to the world if *they* controlled machines such as this submarine ship?"

Nemo sank back once more, leaning his head against the back of the settee. The fire had gone out of his voice. "It is far better that for the present the world thinks of my invention as a sea monster and hunts it with harpoons. So I will continue to play upon the superstitions of fools. I will flash my lights and emit my terrifying roars—and will send to the bottom of the sea all those whom it pleases me to send there."

Despite the brutality of the captain's last remark, Aronnax had the temerity to ask one more question. "That ship —the one that blew up so dreadfully within sight of the *Abraham Lincoln*—was that your doing?"

"Yes," answer Nemo simply.

"I thought so, of course," said the professor and he sounded troubled. The captain sensed it instantly.

"You need waste no pity on those drowned sailors," he said bitterly. "They fully deserved to die. Their ship sailed under the orders of that world power against which I have sworn eternal vengeance." He looked narrowly at the professor with his eyes snapping angrily. "I don't think I have to tell you the name of that accursed nation?"

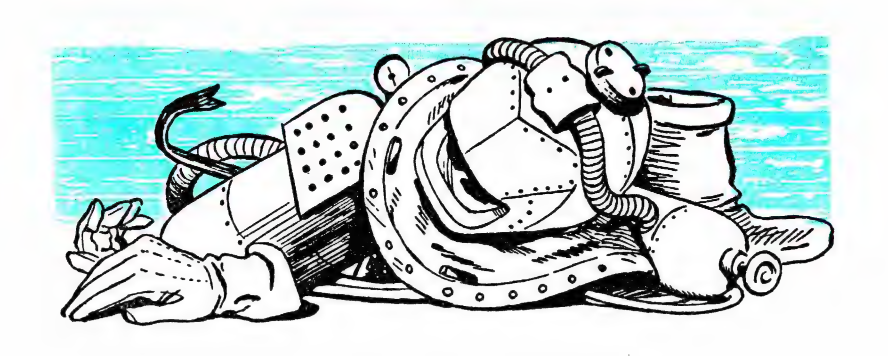
Aronnax shrugged. "Of course it can be only one," he answered, then continued sadly: "Always it seems there

must be one aggressor that threatens and disturbs the peace of the world."

Of a sudden, the man's motives became much clearer. There was a certain method to his madness after all! In that moment, Aronnax lost his physical dread of the captain. Much of the mystery that had surrounded him dropped away.

Rather, now the professor found himself feeling pity for him. What torments must this man have endured at the hands of those against whom he now nurtured such a fanatical hatred! And to what awful lengths would he not go to revenge himself upon his tormentors!

"Surely," thought Aronnax, "in my association with this brilliant and unfortunate man I will be the witness to much that is wonderful and thrilling. But I fear I am also fated to witness many scenes of misery and horror."



CHAPTER 9

Harvest at Sea

Like a huge lazy shark, the *Nautilus* glided gracefully through a marine wonderland—a fairy kingdom that was luminous and mystical. She was fifty fathoms down.

Several days had passed since Aronnax and his friends had been picked up by Nemo. They had by now progressed far from that tragic spot.

Nemo left his prisoners alone most of the time. Whenever he did seek them out, he still concerned himself only with Aronnax and pointedly ignored the other two.

Professor Aronnax and Conseil occupied themselves mostly with the magnificent collection of books in Nemo's library. They were delighted to find many rare and out-of-print volumes which they devoured avidly.

On the other hand, Ned Land, who had no taste for cultural things or matters of the mind, sulked a good deal at first. His efforts to find a friend or kindred soul among the members of the crew came to nothing.

"Dangedest bunch of sailors I've ever seen," he

complained. "They all act like they have something to hide, and I'd swear some of them can't understand a word of English."

He finally struck up a friendship with the captain's pet seal, which was kept in a special compartment off the chart room. Ned played with the seal for hours and held regular conversations with it, while the animal on its own part appeared to be quite taken with the lusty harpooner.

It was the fourth day of steady cruising. Captain Nemo and Aronnax had seated themselves in the sunken alcove before the starboard viewport. The sight was breath-takingly beautiful as the *Nautilus* banked through forests of gigantic coral. Schools of shimmering fish threaded past.

"See how peaceful it is here," said Nemo reverently. "I tell you, Professor, in the ocean I have found everything I have ever wanted. Its breath is clean and healthy. I may roam at will through its vast submarine forests, across its prairies—deeper, ever deeper—into its never-ending space."

"I can well imagine," sighed Aronnax, "that this is a sight of which one would never tire."

"Think of it!" Nemo exclaimed. "On the surface there is hunger and fear. Men exercise tyrannical and unjust laws. They fight and tear each other to pieces like savage beasts. Yet here, a few feet beneath the waves, their vicious reign abruptly ceases. Their power is nullified. Their evil drowns! Here, on the ocean floor, is the only real independence. Only here can one be free!"

Even as he spoke, the dark, canted hull of a sunken ship, an ancient galleon, floated by in this panorama of peace and beauty. It was a sharp reminder of the world above and of the grim fact that only the dead had ever before penetrated this domain of the *Nautilus*.

"We are approaching the island of Crespo," said Nemo as he turned to give an order to the crewman who had come silently into the salon.

"I take it you are going to stop here?" Aronnax queried after the order had been given.

"Yes, this is a routine hold-over. You see, although the island of Crespo sank eons ago, it is nevertheless still very fertile. We do most of our farming and hunting there."

Aronnax was by now used to surprises, but this was totally unexpected.

"You mean—under water?" he asked.

Nemo nodded. "The sea supplies all my wants."

Aronnax now noticed that the *Nautilus* was no longer moving. He felt a series of gentle bumps which indicated that the submarine had come to rest on the ocean floor.

"I have already given permission for your two friends to accompany a party which will leave the ship to harvest a supply of food for us," said Nemo. "Your Mr. Land needs an outlet for his tremendous energy. I do not trust him. He might try to put it to more dangerous uses. Your friend Conseil, by the way, did not show much enthusiasm for the expedition. He appears to be much on the cautious side," he added wryly.

"There is one thing you have not explained to me," puzzled Aronnax, "—the means of getting out of this craft and then of maintaining yourselves independently under water at this great depth."

"The best way to explain that would be to let you experience it," replied the captain. "Would you be interested in joining your friends?"

"Indeed, yes!" cried Aronnax enthusiastically. "I would very much like to experience these wonders myself."

"Very well, you shall. Let us go below." So saying, Nemo arose and led the way from the salon down the spiral staircase.

Aronnax followed to what was the third and lowest level of the ship. On the steel door through which they passed, the professor read the words "Diving Chamber."

"The crewmen and your friends have already left the ship," said Nemo. How he knew this, Aronnax could not determine, unless it had something to do with a gauge on the door which indicated the pressure inside the diving cell. The door itself was of extraordinary thickness yet the captain opened it with ease.

Inside the small compartment there was a strong dank smell of sea water. Aronnax looked about him. Around the riveted walls hung several of the diving suits he had seen on the crewmen during the underwater funeral. Helmets and air tanks to match stood on the floor as did other gear at whose uses he could not even guess. In the center of the room, and easily its dominant feature, was a circular



shoulder-high framework. This was suspended from the ceiling around and over a heavy closed hatch cover which was flush with the deck.

Without thinking, Aronnax remarked, "This looks for all the world like some medieval torture chamber." The next minute he could have bitten off his tongue.

Nemo whirled on him. "Terror and torture are unfortunately not confined to the middle ages," he snapped. "Mankind has still one bloody foot in the slimy dungeons of the murder barons." He was visibly shaken. "But not here!" he added. "Not here!"

Aronnax was truly dismayed at this outburst. "I am very sorry," he faltered. "Please believe me. I shall try not to allude to—to—unpleasant. . . ." He did not finish. He merely looked miserable.

After a brief struggle to control himself, Nemo shrugged.

"I, too, wish to apologize," he murmured stiffly. "But you must understand that I cannot help myself. The past is still too real to me."

Then, seeing the professor's woebegone expression, he said more pleasantly, "Oh, come now, let us not mar your maiden expedition on Crespo in any way. Here," he added in a composed voice, as he unhooked one of the diving suits from its hanger, "put this on as you would a suit of underwear. I'll help you."

They were finally encased in their diving equipment. The outfit which seemed light enough before the professor had put it on, proved to be stiff and cumbersome. When

Captain Nemo added the oxygen tanks and screwed on the heavy helmet, the weight was almost too much for Aronnax. He felt himself sag. However, since Nemo had assured him beforehand that he would not be too conscious of the outfit's weight once in the water, he was most eager to begin the adventure.

What followed was a glimpse into the wonders of the future. Captain Nemo twisted a control fixed on the wall. At once there came a hissing sound which Aronnax could hear quite plainly even through his helmet. The red hand of an indicator quivered violently. Gradually the professor felt a rising pressure against his body. He peered anxiously through his glass visor at Nemo. The latter nodded his helmet ever so slightly in reassurance. The pressure increased but did not become unpleasant. It was quite evident, however, that it must have built up tremendously in the small chamber. When the indicator finally stood at "Maximum," the captain shut off the control.

Nemo now swung the lever which opened the hatch cover in the deck. To Aronnax's surprise, the ocean water which was then revealed remained at deck level and did not gush up into the room as he would have expected it to do. He marveled at this use of an enormous air pressure to control the sea.

Grasping the circular ring above the open hatch and signaling to the professor to do exactly as he was about to do, Captain Nemo lowered himself feet first through the round watery opening. He let go of the railing and slipped

down out of sight with a slight splash, leaving behind only a froth of bubbles.

The professor promptly followed Nemo's example and he, too, dropped into the dark waters. He found himself sliding down a short water-filled tube. Emerging from this under the submarine, his feet found a ladder. Taking a few cumbersome steps down, he found himself standing beside the captain on the sands of the ocean floor. He looked up at the long dark hull above and his heart thrilled within him. He cautiously took a few deep breaths to assure himself that he could really breathe. The air was cool and sweet.

He looked at his companion and motioned with his arm to indicate that he was ready to proceed. Nemo pointed ahead and started off. His helmet fuming bubbles, he laboriously led the way toward a slight rise which loomed through the water not far in front of them.

At first the stubborn resistance of the water to all forward progress was the most notable feature of this strange experience to Aronnax. Like walking through glue, he thought. He began to wonder if he had not overrated his physical capacity. It was with relief that he saw Nemo had reached the top of the rise and had halted. He plodded up abreast of the captain and stood there panting inside of his helmet. The bubbles boiled up furiously from the escape valves.

Nemo pointed down into a vast, luminous valley which spread out under the water as far as they could see. It was

filled with gently waving marine vegetation of all kinds. Here and there a cluster of pinkish coral stood sharply out above it. Brightly colored fish darted in and out of the seaweed. A large blue electric eel with vicious rows of teeth exposed went gliding by unconcernedly as Aronnax instinctively recoiled from it.

Spotted here and there in the underwater forest, members of the crew could be plainly marked by their rising columns of silvery bubbles. Each man appeared to be walking in a small cloud of mist, which was in reality the sand he stirred up as he moved about.

Again Nemo gestured that they were to descend into the beautiful forest below them. The professor now noticed that the captain held in his hand a strange-looking object which he had failed to see before. It was not unlike a gun in appearance, although somewhat stubbier and of singular design. Assuming you could keep the powder charge dry, the professor could not imagine what good a gun would be underwater—if it was a gun! But by this time, he had learned not to question the workability of any contrivance which was aboard the *Nautilus*.

They now made their way down into a sun-splotched wonderland of overwhelming beauty. Large tree-plants of delicate colors—pink, green, olive, brown—reached higher than their heads, their ribbonlike branches stretching for the surface. Beneath them were massed clusters of living flowers of brilliant hue—the sea anemones.

The professor found that going downhill was much

easier. His amazement and pleasure in the scene were indescribable. Occasionally he stopped to pick some strange shell and put it in one of the pouches hanging from his belt. Or he would stoop to examine some rare plant or animal that he had never seen before except in some dried out and colorless form in a museum. He was enjoying himself exactly like a city-bred urchin who visits the country for the first time.

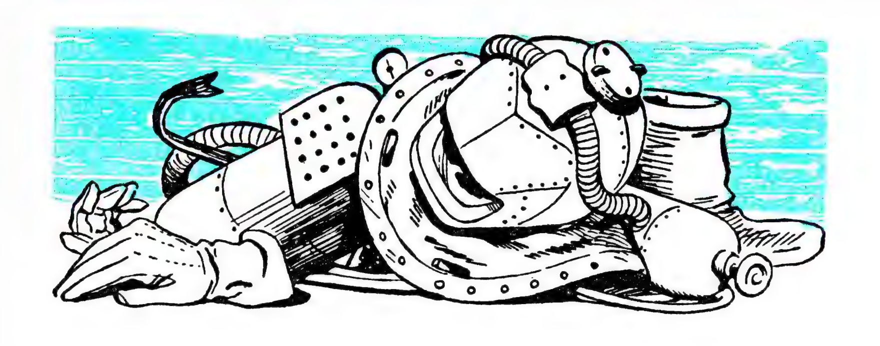
Out of the gently writhing tangle of bright-hued vegetation came one of the crew. His arms were piled high with an odd type of kelp which he had harvested to replenish the ship's larder. Others of the crew were also ready to head back to the *Nautilus*. Some bent under the weight of baskets loaded with shellfish and shrimp. Two of the men went past leading a huge sea turtle like a dog on a leash. This creature would make a savory potage for the captain's table! Others carried strings of gaudily colored fish which they had speared.

It was indeed an extraordinary farming operation. Through it all Nemo moved about, directing, appraising, at times lending a hand when it was needed. Of them all, he seemed to be the one most completely at home in this unnatural element.

Meanwhile, Aronnax had found a most extraordinary prize, a shell that spiraled to the left instead of to the right. In great glee, he added this rare find to his others in the pouch, picturing to himself the surprise of his colleagues in Paris when he laid his treasures out before them. He was

finally reminded of the passing of time by Nemo who made motions toward the *Nautilus* to indicate that it was time to leave. Looking about him, Aronnax saw that the crewmen had already gone and that only he and Nemo remained.

Then through the thick glass plate on his helmet, Captain Nemo's silent lips were asking Aronnax a question which made his blood run cold with apprehension. Where were Conseil and Ned Land?



CHAPTER 10

Treasure for the Taking

Although out of sight, Aronnax's two friends were not very far away. They had been left to their own devices while the crewmen were occupied with their food-gathering. In looking about, Ned Land's practiced eyes had spied what looked like the stumpy mainmast of a ship showing above a slight rise in the distance.

He was close enough to Conseil to nudge him and indicate that they should go and investigate the strange object. Conseil drew back. He had very little stomach for the whole expedition anyway. Now the foolhardy harpooner was suggesting that they stray still farther away from the precarious safety of the submarine!

Ned, sensing the little man's reluctance, gave him an impatient shove in the direction of the wreck and the rebellious Conseil had no choice but to go along with him. He followed slowly as the impatient whaler thrust his strong body against the restraining water.

When they reached the top of the dune, they looked

down into a meadowland of short, grasslike seaweed in which lay the broken hull of a ship. It was a galleon, and from the once splendid and ornate carvings of her high gilded poop, Ned guessed at once that it was a Spaniard. That could mean only one thing. Treasure!

"What a windfall!" he thought exultantly.

The two men looked at each other. Through the heavy glass of his helmet, Ned's blue eyes gleamed with excitement. He shouted for Conseil to follow him, forgetting momentarily that Conseil could not hear him. Then he turned with a violent jerk and plowed furiously down the hill toward the gray hulk. He did not bother to see if Conseil would obey him. Lust for the gold he knew must be in that pitiful wreck had taken complete possession of him. His near-hysteria infected his companion, who for once plodded forward toward possible danger completely unmindful of it.

The ship lay imbedded in the ocean bottom, her decks canted toward the two approaching adventurers. There was a great gaping hole in her side. Fish of all descriptions darted through the rotted timbers. They swirled in dizzy formations about the sparless masts and through unhinged cabin doors. Fish were everywhere, circling the rusted anchor and gliding through the ruins of the vast stern window. On the peeling wood above the shattered rudder post they could still read her brave name: *Buenaventura.* She was a dead ship of another century—full of dead men.

Ned did not stop for an instant to philosophize over the

sad end of so much human pomp. He pushed aside a rotting piece of railing and climbed onto the slanting deck. Conseil followed, placing his heavily shod feet gingerly on the unsteady planking.

At the door to the rear cabin, an unclothed skeleton lay sprawled, its bones disconnected. As Ned stepped over it to enter the poop, the swirl of the water caused it to disintegrate further. The skull rolled in slow motion down the deck toward Conseil. The latter cowered away from the grinning thing and watched it with loathing as it tumbled over the side, pursued by a score of curious little fish. He hastily followed Ned into the cabin. He was too frightened to remain alone on that dreadful deck.

Together now, with Ned leading, they made their way carefully down a rickety stairway whose remaining boards barely sustained their weight. Would they ever be able to get back up them, thought Conseil in despair! It was eerie down below. *Things* lurked in the dark places under the steps—nameless things that made Conseil's flesh crawl. He felt a kind of mounting terror in his throat and longed again for the safety of Nemo's ship. Only Ned's imperturbable presence kept him from cracking under his fear.

Safely down the stairs, they found themselves in what had once been the dining salon. It was now a scene of unearthly desolation; the massive carved sideboard and table had collapsed, silver plate was scattered about, and in the gloomy corners were more gleaming evidences of human bones. Over everything, including walls and floor-



boards, was a thick hard crust of barnacles overlaid with a patina of greenish sea moss.

A heavy door barred passage to the extreme rear of the ship. Ned picked up a heavy plank, disturbing others as he did so. The loosened boards floated ceiling-ward amid showers of silt and slime which clouded the water around them. He swung the massive piece of timber against the door. It disintegrated softly and soundlessly. At the same instant they were aware that the shock had jarred the structure of the stairway behind them. It, too, came apart as Conseil watched with eyes full of fear.

Ned, however, gave no thought to how they were to get out again. He stepped across the threshold and stood at the head of a ladder which led to a still lower chamber. Looking down into this large room which had been the ship's lazarette, he saw a welter of decaying bales, furniture, sprung cargo cases, and many no longer recognizable objects. This was what he was looking for. The ship's storeroom! Here was where they would be most likely to find treasure chests. Slowly Ned backed down the slippery ladder and the thoroughly terrified Conseil followed.

Enough light from outside was admitted through missing planks to illuminate the part of the room where they stood. Behind them, however, the hold extended far amidships, and there it was all dark and forbidding. What dreadful things might be lurking in those awful recesses, thought Conseil. He was determined that nothing could induce him to go farther—nothing! He hoped desperately that the

search would be over before Ned decided to explore deeper into the hold.

As though in answer to his unspoken wishes, Ned tugged at his sleeve and pointed. The harpooner's keen eyes had pinpointed what they sought. In a corner under a ragged opening stood a sturdy brass-bound chest.

Ned lost no time in falling to work on its corroded lock. One downward thrust from a rusty cutlass he had picked up from the floor and the old chest surrendered without a struggle. As Conseil stared openmouthed, Ned pulled up the lid. There stood revealed such a treasure trove as had existed before only in his wilder dreams.

Leather pouches, burst open by time and dissolution, were spilling precious stones. Dusky pearls gleamed among heavy gold doubloons. There were exquisitely wrought trinkets and jewelry—baubles that had never touched the fair ladies for whom they were intended, long centuries ago. There was even a princely crown set with diamonds and rubies.

Conseil put his gloved hand out and rubbed the crown gently. He was thrilled even though he could feel nothing through the thickness of his glove. But Ned wasted no time on sentiment; his practical mind was already studying how they might get their booty back to the *Nautilus*.

He closed the lid and tried to pick up the cask without Conseil's help. It was just a little more than he could manage alone. Motioning to Conseil to lend a hand, he discovered that with the two of them the chest was fairly

manageable. Conseil was secretly dismayed and wondered how they would ever transport such a bulky object so far against the resistance of the water.

Ned motioned impatiently toward the ladder. They had taken only a step, when a violent disturbance of the water behind them gave warning that there was something else in the room with them. Conseil dropped his end of the load and turned as quickly as he could. He froze with terror.

Out of the darkened recesses of the ship a huge tiger shark swooped toward them. It circled past almost within touching distance, banking in an arc so that they saw its cruel teeth and ghastly white belly. Then it headed back into the shadows to ready itself for another pass at its intended victims.

This time it went for Ned Land. As it rushed out to strike, Ned threw himself flat with remarkable quickness. The killer went careening against the bulkhead behind, snapping its empty jaws into the cloud of ascending bubbles. Meanwhile Conseil, terror-stricken, dropped to his knees behind a heavy wine cask.

Its beady eyes gleaming, the shark came on again. But now the harpooner was ready for it. He snatched up his discarded cutlass as the monster closed in for the kill. Skillfully evading its crashing jaws, he sent the point of his weapon into the side of its head. The huge fish recoiled. It writhed upward toward the ceiling leaving a bright ribbon of blood trailing behind it. Its wildly threshing tail swept

Ned from his feet but fortunately did not stun him. He twisted to his feet again as quickly as his clumsy gear would allow. Seeing the unprotected white belly of his assailant immediately above him, he thrust in his cutlass halfway to the hilt. The viciousness of the ocean's most cruel assassin was being outdone by that of its human opponent.

Blood clouded the water about them as they watched the maddened shark vanish from sight into the darkness amidships. Ned stood defiantly looking after his enemy with his rusted blade poised. He knew he had not given it a mortal wound by the ferocity with which the creature still lashed about, creating a violent disturbance in the water all around them.

But Ned would not be denied his treasure.

He signaled to Conseil to get out from behind the wine cask and to help him pull it into position against the ladder. Then they lifted the treasure chest up on to it, Conseil casting many an anguished glance back into the shadows where the shark was still crashing about furiously.

They had lifted the chest halfway up the ladder with Conseil pulling and Ned doing the bulk of the work, lifting it from underneath, when the pain-maddened shark came at them again. Conseil, thinking that the beast was this time coming directly at him, dropped from the ladder down onto the chest. The added weight of Conseil falling suddenly on the chest and Ned, collapsed the wine barrel beneath them. Under the impact of this crashing weight, the rotted floorboards gave way.

In the confusion of flailing arms and seething masses of bubbles, the shark again missed its prey. It circled away and returned to find them gone. A jagged hole in the floor planking led to its victims. It followed through, swooping out of the bottom of the ship over the heads of the two men sprawling below. It had them out in the open now and they were without a weapon. Circling far around before making its finishing charge, it leveled out and headed for them. There was to be no doubt about the outcome this time.

On it came. Then something struck it dead in its tracks! *Lightning!*

But not from the sky! It was a well-directed electrical bullet from the gun of Captain Nemo—for it had indeed been a gun that the professor had seen in his hand. The savage slayer of the deep stiffened and began to float slowly up toward the surface, his very blood congealed by the terrific shock.

Ned and Conseil watched this drama with fascinated unbelief. They turned to see Nemo, with his electric gun still bubbling at the muzzle. Beside him stood the professor. They were on the rise not over fifty yards away.

The captain instantly signaled for the two adventurers to come away. Ned looked down at the treasure chest. Part of its bright contents was spilled out upon the sand at his feet. He shook his head slowly at the captain and pointed down to his booty, making motions that he would not leave without the treasure.

He continued stubbornly to ignore Nemo's imperious summons, as he tried frantically to scoop up the spilled jewels and coins. But his rebellion was short-lived. Summoning several of his crewmen who were never far from their captain, Nemo ordered the recalcitrant harpooner dragged back to the *Nautilus* by main force. And that without so much as one doubloon of his treasure!

Nemo was in a cold fury as a result of the incident. He sat down to his evening meal alone except for the professor with whom, indeed, he had no quarrel. Aronnax was extremely uncomfortable. Nothing he could say during the early part of the repast would seduce his angry host from his black mood. The professor finally gave up trying and ate the rest of his dinner in silence, and as quickly as he could. He secretly resolved to have a serious talk with Ned. When he excused himself and left the table, Captain Nemo did not even acknowledge him. It was a great relief to the professor to leave that gloom-infested room.

Going to his cabin, he summoned his erring companions. They came like two misbehaving schoolboys expecting to be punished. Aronnax spoke to Ned as the principal offender. There was no anger in his voice.

"I don't have to tell you," he started, "that Captain Nemo is furious—particularly with you, Ned."

As if to substantiate the professor's statement, there came an angry crash of chords from Nemo's pipe organ in the salon. Then there followed a fierce turbulence of notes

that rose and fell like the spiteful howling of a typhoon. It was not music, it was sheer rage expressed in sound. It made Aronnax and Conseil shudder. Ned flinched.

They could not help but listen in utter fascination to this fiery outpouring. Not until its first spiteful fury had subsided and been replaced by a somewhat less violent mood in the composition did Aronnax resume his talk with his friends. He nodded toward the door. His face was very serious.

"When he is like that, he is capable of anything," he said. "I firmly believe that our very lives are in jeopardy. You know, of course, that what you did today was very wrong."

"I couldn't help myself," Ned defended his actions. "When I saw all that treasure—gold—silver—pearls and diamonds! Why, a man wouldn't be human if he didn't try to hold on to it!" But he knew his defense was weak.

"There is something far greater at stake," said Aronnax gravely. "You must try to grasp the significance of all this." He waved his arm to include the whole ship. "Here we are within reach of the most fabulous discoveries of the ages. We owe it to mankind to bring these secrets back with us. To do this I need time to win Nemo's trust and confidence. Nothing else matters—not gold or silver or, for that matter, our own lives. Do you not understand that, my friend?"

"Oh, I suppose I do," Ned answered awkwardly. "But it ain't easy to knuckle under. I can't help thinking that it wouldn't be so hard to take over this ship if a body went about it the right way. I've been keeping my eyes peeled,

I can tell you, and I'd sure like to leave this iron skillet with my pockets lined." He added enthusiastically, "And maybe I wouldn't like to get my hands on that electric gun of his!" However, on seeing Aronnax's face fall, he quickly put out his big hand. "But don't worry, Professor, I won't do anything to cross you, and here's my hand on it."

They shook hands solemnly but Aronnax could not help feeling that the harpooner's good intentions were entirely too much at the mercy of his violent passions. The music swelled into another angry burst of sound that shook the very room. It seemed to bear out his misgivings. He only hoped that he would be able to pick up his budding relationship with Nemo where it had been blighted by Ned Land's misconduct.

By staying discreetly out of Nemo's way until sheer pique or possibly lonesomeness drove the moody captain to seek out his company, Aronnax was able to effect a reconciliation. But it was quite plain that Nemo had put his displeasure with Ned Land and Conseil on a permanent basis.

His peace offering, when it came, was an invitation to Aronnax to inspect the power plant of the *Nautilus*. Up to that time, he had curtly refused to permit the professor to see this place whenever the latter had hinted at his curiosity concerning it.

But one day, Nemo came to the door of the professor's cabin and said, shortly, "I am going down to the power chamber. If you care to accompany me, you are welcome."

The invitation was not made in a conciliatory tone but

Aronnax realized that the gesture in itself was a very considerable concession.

He put aside the book he was reading and answered quietly, "I would be most happy to, sir."

Some of the excitement he felt leaped into his eyes and this was not lost on Nemo. His lip curled in a scornful smile as he turned to lead the way.

"At last," gloated Aronnax to himself, "this fabulous secret is to be laid bare for me. I must look sharp—remain alert!"

He followed his host who said not another word as they proceeded to the aft stairway and wound their way down to the bottom deck of the submarine. One of the crewmen stood guard before the door of the power room. He gave the typically unmilitary salute in use on the *Nautilus,* and Nemo returned it. Then, taking out a key, Nemo unlocked the door and threw it open.

Aronnax did not know what to expect as they stepped into the chamber, but he had several preconceived ideas based on what he already knew of physics and engineering. What he saw was entirely beyond his comprehension. He found himself peering through a narrow glass window which was set in a heavy shield of lead. The central object seen through this—indeed the only object there which could possibly be the power plant—was astonishingly small and unimpressive. It could not have been much larger than a good-sized packing case and it was sheathed entirely by a dull metal. It had no visible moving parts as did a steam



engine; there was no roaring, no hissing, no electrical crackling nor hum that he was aware of. And no attendants, no stokers, no oilers. In short it was a shocking disappointment.

He turned to see Nemo looking at him with his usual cold, enigmatical smile on his bearded lips. "Not quite what you expected, eh?" said the captain, mockingly.

"But surely this—this little—whatever you call it—cannot run this large vessel," Aronnax faltered.

Captain Nemo gave his familiar shrug. "Believe it or not," he answered, "it does! And with ease! An accidental discovery of a hidden source of natural power has made this possible. Yet great as this power is, it was extremely simple to harness once it was discovered. A basic and fundamental law of nature is involved. Once the formula was found, the rest followed inevitably. Oh, it was not my work alone," he added hastily. "Bertholi and another great scientist, also now dead, did the critical theoretical work. To give it practical application was then comparatively simple."

"The secret of life," Aronnax faltered. Perspiration broke from his forehead.

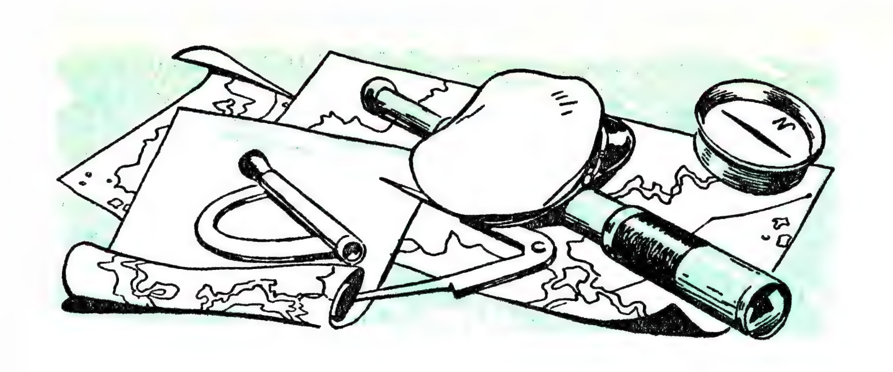
"You might call it that," returned Captain Nemo dryly. "You might also call it the secret of death."

Aronnax turned to look through the thick glass again. He knew now that the mere sight of this marvelous contrivance was not enough. It could tell him nothing unless he could get at it to take it apart. Even then he wondered how much he could learn from it, for he was no physicist!

If he were to learn the dynamic theory behind its operation, he would have to get it directly from the lips of the man beside him. Here was the sole surviving member of the three pioneers and developers. The very thought that the great secret could die with this man before it was revealed to the world made cold chills course up and down his spine.

As he considered the enormous difficulty of extracting the secret from so suspicious and cold-blooded a man, he was filled with sudden despair. How could he ever hope to accomplish this? Nevertheless he vowed that he would try, and try again, until he succeeded! He would conspire as cleverly as his wits would allow him . . . do everything necessary to make himself indispensible . . . let no harshness discourage him . . . abase himself . . . give his very life, if it came to that. For the world must have this magical discovery which could be such a boon to mankind—make mortals into veritable gods—create a heaven on earth. For this, no sacrifice was too great!

Thus reasoned the scientist, as had every other humanitarian before him.



CHAPTER 11

The Slave Camp

Time passed and league followed league under the mysterious waters of the earth. Wonder upon wonder was disclosed; Aronnax learned of the lost cities of Atlantis and Lemuria—sunken civilizations that survived in the world above only as half-believed myths; fiercely erupting volcanoes so far in the ocean's depths that their presence was not even suspected on the surface; that vast black hole in the Pacific, the Tuscarora Deep, so forbidding that even Captain Nemo recoiled from descending into it; the underwater tunnel connecting the Red Sea with the Mediterranean at the Isthmus of Suez, known only to Nemo.

And all the while, whether the *Nautilus* was in the icy waters of the polar cap or safely submerged under tropic seas while frightful typhoons roared across the surface, Professor Aronnax remained true to the promise he had made to himself—to do all he could to unlock the secrets of Nemo's great invention. He placed himself completely at the captain's disposal, neglecting his two companions

who soon began to withdraw from him in suspicion and self-defense. Their distrust hurt him, but the professor told himself that it was all in a great cause.

Yet he learned very little of importance as a result of his studied campaign. He did find out that the submarine had been conceived and planned on the unknown island of Vulcania, that the various parts of it had been manufactured by separate firms of machinists in both America and England who had not the slightest notion of what they were making. He learned of the long hours of trial and error and of the disasters that took their toll of lives including that of the first of the three colleagues to die. He heard of their moments of apprehension as to how well their secret was being kept. Most of the background of the fantastic enterprise was freely confided to Aronnax in time.

But the core of the great secret remained sealed behind Nemo's lips. Any approach to the subject was met by a stern rebuff, so that Aronnax had to tread warily. The only conclusion the professor arrived at concerning the matter was that it had something to do with the smallest division or unit of created substance. With his limited knowledge of this branch of physics, he could arrive at no satisfactory answer. Nor was this ignorance any fault of his. The scientific world of the time knew little more than he did. The geniuses who were to unlock these mysteries independent of Nemo and his compeers had not yet been born.

There came another day when Captain Nemo sought Aronnax out in his cabin. There was a strange air about

the usually taciturn captain. Aronnax was struck by it immediately. It seemed to be a sort of suppressed excitement and tension. "Like a man about to go into battle," thought the professor.

"We are surfacing," said Nemo. "I am going ashore here in the pinnace. I would very much like to have you accompany me. There is something I think you should see." He paused and added, "I ought to warn you, however, that there is some element of danger in this project."

"I am at your service, Captain," responded the professor quietly, as he put aside his pipe and the book he was reading. He stood up to signify that he was ready.

"What I am about to show you," continued Nemo as he led the way out, "is far from pleasant, my dear professor. But I feel I owe it to you as explanation, in some fashion, for some of my acts of which you so strongly disapprove."

They came out on deck. The *Nautilus* was lying quietly about a quarter of a league from a spit of palm-covered land that was obviously an island.

"That is the island of Rorapandi," said Nemo with a harshness in his voice and a bitter glint in his narrowed eyes.

Aronnax started. "The prison island of Rorapandi?" he asked. "Yes, I have heard of it. Who has not? But I was under the impression that the prison camp had been abolished."

"No, it is still there!" Nemo pointed. "That foul symbol of man's inhumanity to man flourishes as vigorously as ever.

Come along and I will show you the truth."

Several of the crew had come out on deck by the other hatch. In response to their operation of different levers, a section of the deck opened to reveal a small boat snuggled in a sunken compartment. By mechanical means the men raised this from its cradle and launched it over the side. Then two of the sailors got in to steady it while Aronnax and Nemo clambered aboard.

As they pulled away from the *Nautilus* Aronnax noticed Ned Land and Conseil standing to one side with sullen looks on their faces. He waved his hand at them in an embarrassed gesture which Conseil returned half-heartedly. Ned Land ignored it completely.

The skiff headed through choppy seas toward the finger of land where a short beach could be seen beneath the fringe of tropical greenery. They landed through the heavy surf without difficulty thanks to the skillful manipulations of the crewmen.

Aronnax looked anxiously about and studied the nearby jungle with mounting apprehension.

"Are there no guards?" he asked. "Can we not be seen?"

"No," Nemo snorted. "They fancy themselves safe. Ascribe it to the stupidity of the arrogant. They think no one would dare to set foot on their hellish shores. Indeed, the evil reputation of this island in this remote quarter of the world is a powerful deterrent. The natives give it a wide berth. I, however, have landed here before with impunity. This place holds an unholy fascination for me,"

he continued moodily. "I think perhaps I am driven to it to renew my hate."

He gave an order to the crewmen to remain by the pinnace, then led the way up the beach into the dense tropical jungle. Aronnax followed the captain as he threaded a scarcely discernible trail. This came to an abrupt stop at the foot of a steep hillside. Nemo unhesitatingly continued up the rugged slope like one who is familiar with every ledge and foothold. He pressed upward impatiently, ignoring the fact that it was decidedly difficult for the older man to keep up with him.

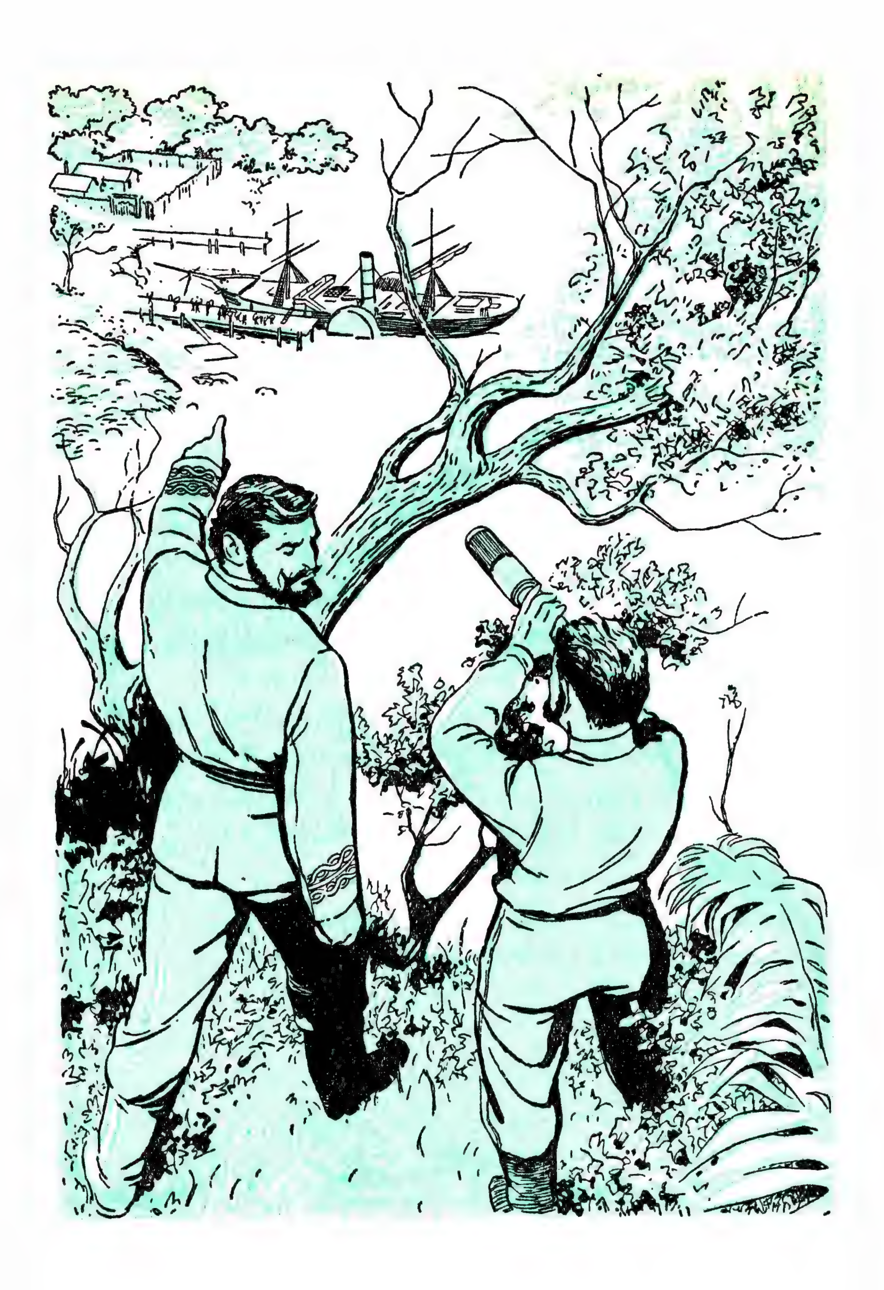
When they finally reached the summit, Aronnax was painfully winded but Captain Nemo showed nothing but intense emotional excitement.

"There it is," he said. His voice vibrated with hate. "Behold! Freedom's grave!"

Aronnax looked down. Below them lay the clear waters of the bay and the shore of the island. Extending into the island, like an ugly wound in the surrounding greenery, were the ill-famed mines and prison compounds of Rorapandi. A ship that displayed no flag lay at anchor by a wharf. The professor recoiled from the scene.

"Here, take this," said Nemo as he held out his telescope. "You can see what is going on much better with it."

Aronnax took the instrument without a word and applied it to his eye. Now he saw men—if they could still be called that. Pitiful, emaciated wrecks of humanity they were, wearing rags and chained together, each one trudging along



carrying a heavy sack upon his back. Other men were milling about aimlessly in the prison enclosures or crawling through the dust. Aronnax gasped as one of the miserable wretches in the chain gang staggered and slumped to the ground. Instantly one of the helmeted guards was upon him, raining blows upon his inert body with a heavy whip.

An exclamation of pity broke from Aronnax's lips. He put away the glass, unable to look any more.

"It is too dreadful," he said. "I cannot bear it! What will happen to that poor creature?"

"When his usefulness is over, he will be thrown to the sharks," answered Nemo. "A human life is nothing to them. It is their cheapest commodity. You do not have to look through the glass to verify what I am saying."

He turned to study the distant scene on the beach while Aronnax sat down and turned away his head.

"I can see plainly with my naked eyes," Nemo went on, ruthlessly ignoring the professor's anguish. "I can see that others with white helmets are surrounding the fallen slave. They are picking—no—they are dragging him off to cast him into the bay where the sharks will make him welcome as they have many another. Do not waste your pity on him. His torment is over. Have pity, rather, on those victims who remain alive. Above all, grant some of your sympathy to those few of us who have been through that living hell and have escaped. For the horror of this place is branded forever on their minds. Waking or sleeping, they are haunted men and life holds nothing for them that is not seared with

the heat of bitterness and everlasting hatred."

He sat down beside Aronnax. He seemed emotionally spent.

"How did you and your friends succeed in escaping from this place?" Aronnax asked quietly.

"It is a long heart-wrenching story," answered Nemo. "We could not have brought it off without a great deal of luck. We seized one of their ships and made our break during a terrible typhoon. Drowning at sea was preferable to a living death here. How we ever managed to stay afloat when all else was foundering I do not know. Through hunger and thirst and all manner of hardships we still managed to land on the uncharted island of Vulcania where we eventually built the *Nautilus,* as I have told you."

"You have never confided in me the whereabouts of Vulcania," Aronnax ventured. "It sounds remote."

"Yes, remote, and therefore doubly useful. When our mission here is completed, the *Nautilus* will head for Vulcania. We are all going to the only home we know." Nemo stood up. "If you have seen enough here, we will return to the beach."

"I have seen more than I care to," answered Aronnax sadly, getting to his feet. "This is everlastingly burned into my memory. Let us go."

As they clambered down the hill, Aronnax suddenly thought to ask, "What sort of an operation are they engaged in back there? What were those poor devils carrying in those heavy sacks?"

"Nitrates and phosphorus for explosives—the sinews of war," Nemo answered. "They are loading a cargo of death and when that ship takes it home the world will die a little more. The shackles of subject peoples will be fastened still more tightly than they have been."

They continued their descent in silence for a while. When they were once more near the beach, Nemo spoke again. Almost as if making an audible promise to himself, he said, "That ship which flies no flag will never reach its destination."

Aronnax digested this for some time, then asked in troubled tones, "You plan to sink it then?"

"That ship of death will sail with the tide tonight, and as surely as it casts off from that island just so surely will I destroy it."

They had plunged into the tangled growth between the hillside and the beach. There was no opportunity for further conversation. But all the while they were pushing their way through the jungle, words of protest were building themselves up inside the troubled professor's head. At length they stood together on the white strand. Then Aronnax had the courage to speak. He knew he might be jeopardizing the hard-won esteem of the captain, but he could not help himself.

"Did you ask me ashore and show me man's ultimate inhumanity to man in order to justify your contemplated act of . . . murder?" he asked.

Nemo turned upon him hotly. "You call it murder, do

you?" he snarled. "Well, I see murder, too! Not written on the faces of those poor stupid dupes back there who carry out the commands of their vicious overlords, but in the faces of their innocent victims—thousands upon countless thousands." He pointed back toward the prison camp. "There are your murderers—your assassins!"

Then his furious dark eyes fastened themselves on Aronnax's white face. He spoke deliberately, biting out each syllable: "I—am—the—avenger!"

He turned and strode toward the boat. Aronnax followed, painfully conscious that in protesting the captain's proposed act of vengeance he had done a foolish and useless thing. The return to the *Nautilus* was accomplished in stony silence. Once aboard, Nemo went immediately to the control room while Aronnax sought the privacy of his cabin.

He could hear the captain's harsh commands and the other sounds that signaled the submarine's imminent departure. Then from the salon came a crashing chord—savage—exultant! Nemo was at his organ once more, in emotional communion with death. *Kill! Kill! Kill!* screamed the brazen pipes and the music roared through the *Nautilus,* filling every nook and cranny, as the ship slipped silently away.



CHAPTER 12

Captain Nemo's Revenge

The sun was sinking into the sea as the nitrate ship left the harbor of Rorapandi and steamed through the coral reef out into the open sea. Squat and ugly, she carried no armament and had very little speed. The *Nautilus* stalked her for a while, keeping out of sight and jockeying for position.

When he considered the time ripe for attack, Captain Nemo brought his ship around against this floating bombshell to approach her at a tangent. He set his course to converge from the northeast as his target bore due west. He called an order to the mate who was at the dials on the bulkhead.

"Lighten ship," he commanded. "Clear for action!"

"All clear," echoed the mate and thrust home the multiple controls.

Nemo ascended the stairway to the control room. He took his position by the forward ports and stared out toward the paddle-wheeler, gauging the distance and checking on the angle of his approach.

"Very good," he said tersely to the crewman who stood behind him. "Let us show them our 'sound and fury.' "

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the sailor, and he transmitted the order.

"Secure for ramming!" ordered Nemo.

"All secured!"

"Full collision speed ahead!"

"Full collision speed ahead!" repeated the crewman, and the *Nautilus* seemed to gather itself and leap forward. The horrible howling sound which it emitted when attacking could be heard plainly above the other noises of the ship. Twin spouts of water gushed upward from two pipes near the bow plates. These could be seen arching like gigantic white plumes over the back of the submarine.

"Hold her steady on her course," said Nemo through clenched teeth. "They are dead men!"

The nitrate ship was churning her way slowly through the sea. As she breached the crest of a large swell, her lookout evidently sighted the attacker for she faltered momentarily and then veered clumsily. Her tall funnel fumed black gobs of smoke shot through with streamers of sparks. Her paddle wheels threshed the darkening water with desperate fury. The strain of trying to turn so abruptly almost caused her to capsize. She went over on her beam ends, her port scuppers smothered in foam and her starboard paddle wheel careening wildly in the air. But she did not go over. In the trough of the wave, she wallowed helplessly as the *Nautilus* bore down upon her. Her fear-crazed

crew began to throw themselves overboard rather than be blown to bits.

A cable's length from the doomed ship, the submarine went into her dive, closing for the kill. She straightened at bilge level and came in hard. The old timbers of the side-wheeler caved in like matchsticks as the cruel ram of the *Nautilus* tore through her keel. The stricken vessel heeled far over as her attacker emerged upon the opposite side and turned sharply to view the results. As the steamer rolled drunkenly back, there was no doubt about the fact she had received a mortal wound. But there was more horror to come.

Suddenly and without any warning her deck seemed to rise slowly; then followed a brilliant eruption of fire and an ear-splitting roar as the nitrates in her hold let go. The superstructure of the vessel went hurtling skyward in a splintered mass of wreckage, and a huge billow of brown smoke rolled over the water. Flashing and roaring through this pall came another fierce detonation, and out of the swirling cloud rose a fiery ball which arched high over head and landed hissing far out into the sea. Yet the death throes of the steamer were still not over. Although settling fast, what remained of her was still racked with angry flames and sharp individual explosions. Around the sinking ship the fire-reddened water was dotted with the dark heads of her survivors—a mere handful.

At a safe distance, the *Nautilus* circled slowly but made no effort to approach close enough to pick up the men.

Aronnax was in his cabin when the shock of the collision came. He rushed out into the passageway to meet Conseil and Ned Land. The latter two had been previously sent to their quarters by Nemo and were not fully aware of what was happening. Conseil was terrified.

"We have struck a reef," he cried. "We shall die like rats in a trap."

Ned was cursing Nemo and all his works savagely to himself, and looking wildly about the passageway to figure out how to escape.

"We have just rammed a ship carrying nitrate," said Aronnax. "I don't believe there is any danger—for us."

The sudden upward tilt of the deck caused them to stagger backward.

"We're surfacing," cried Ned. "I've got to see what's going on out there." He ran aft toward the chart room, followed at a distance by Conseil.

There was great activity in the chart room. The two men found the ladder blocked by the mate and several crew members who motioned them violently out of the room. Leading the way, Ned pushed through the short alley and into the main salon. "We'll have a grandstand seat all our own," he cried.

He leaped down into the starboard viewing well and seized the controls which operated the viewport. Conseil hastened to do likewise on the opposite side. As the steel outside cover of the window slowly slid open, Ned could see that whatever was happening was not on his side of the

ship. He sprang across to take over from Conseil who was still fumbling at the knobs.

Illuminated by the lights of the *Nautilus,* there was plenty to see. The dark hull of the steamer was not more than two hundred yards away from them, and as they looked there came the first shock of the explosion. A fierce turbulence of water and some shreds of iron debris were hurled into their faces so that they instinctively recoiled, expecting the window to be shattered. But Nemo had built well and the toughened glass held firmly.

"She's blown to smithereens," muttered Ned. "I'm sure glad we weren't closer."

Now as explosion followed explosion and the shattered ship began to sink before their eyes, the canting of the deck told them that the *Nautilus* was going to follow her down. Nemo was going to prolong his vengeance and draw his exultation out to the full as his hated enemy plunged to her watery grave.

Aronnax had come quietly into the salon and stood watching with them. All three stared in horrid fascination as the blasted hulk floated slowly down, turning over and over in the transparent water like a falling leaf. They could not tear their eyes away from the tragic sight.

And now they were aware that the *Nautilus* was circling closer and closer, disclosing more grisly details of this underwater massacre. It was ghoulish. But the danger of it was what alarmed Ned. "He's crazy to get this close to it," he muttered.



"Alas!" said Conseil in a dazed voice. "All those poor souls—blown to fragments or drowned! What a tragedy!"

Ned cut in bitterly. "They didn't have a chance. They were sailors like me—no matter what flag they sailed under!" Sensing Aronnax's presence he turned. "You saw how he slaughtered them without a chance," he accused, then asked bitterly, "Now what do you think of that bloodthirsty butcher you're cozying up to? Do you still think he's such a thundering genius?"

So hypnotized was Aronnax by the magnitude of the disaster that he did not hear him, but Conseil rose loyally to his compatriot's defense.

"Please," he begged, "Professor Aronnax is best suited to judge. We must have patience and faith—"

He got no further, for Ned's fears for the safety of the *Nautilus* were suddenly and terribly realized. In one last tremendous detonation, the nitrate ship blew up before their eyes. The greenish water outside the viewport flamed brilliant red and a blast like the blow from a giant battering ram struck the submarine a jolt that would have caved in a vessel of ordinary construction.

Those in the salon were thrown into a heap as the chamber began to corkscrew crazily in all directions. Furniture and fittings crashed shatteringly together, while outside the viewport a fierce turbulence gave evidence of the terrific strain being brought to bear upon the craft. The viewports quivered and shuddered alarmingly as though about to be blown in from their frames.

With native presence of mind, Ned Land hurled himself upon the controls in a superhuman effort and the steel covers circled down protectively on the viewports.

They could now feel the upward thrust of the submarine as she whirled toward the surface of the sea, completely out of control.

"That's the end of this tin kettle," gritted Ned. "And it could good and well be the end of us, too."

He picked himself up unsteadily from the viewing well into which he had been thrown.

"They're not keeping me from the escape hatches," he cried, "if I have to start a one-man mutiny right now!" He grabbed a Moorish scimitar and shield which had been part of the wall decorations. "Are you with me? Come along mates!"

But the mere sight of Aronnax and Conseil told him that they most certainly were not. Conseil had fallen on his shoulder with a hard crash, and he was now nursing it with pain-twisted features. Aronnax just looked at him and shook his head. Ned gave an exclamation of disgust.

What put an end to Ned's brief mutiny, however, was not merely the professor's disapproval. It was the realization that suddenly the *Nautilus* was no longer out of control. She had ceased her erratic careening and the floor of the salon resumed an even keel. All that could be felt now was a slight sensation of upward floating.

"Looks like they got her trimmed again," said Ned appraisingly. "Just in time, too, I'd say." He looked about

at the shambles which had been the salon. "What a mess! All Nemo's little playthings ruined. Hah! Serves him right, the murdering ghoul!"

Aronnax was beside his friend Conseil. "Your shoulder—is it bad, *hein?*"

"No, no, my good friend," murmured Conseil, sensing a possible reconciliation. "It is nothing to the terror we have just experienced. Yourself—you are not injured?"

Aronnax assayed a chuckle. "I am beginning to think I am indestructible."

Captain Nemo seemed to have the peculiar faculty of projecting his presence even before he was seen. And it was so now. All three men turned around to look as if impelled by some psychic force. They saw their captor framed in the entrance of the salon. He was standing with one hand holding aside the heavy hanging. He seemed as one in a dream or under the influence of some powerful narcotic; his eyes wandered, half-seeing, around the debris-strewn salon which had been his pride and joy.

When his glance touched Ned Land, who still had the sword and shield in his hands, he roused himself. The customary black look came snapping into his eyes.

"Put down your weapon and go to your quarters," he ordered coldly. He turned to include Conseil. "You will go also."

He appeared to ignore Aronnax's presence.

At this moment, Ned Land could undoubtedly have cut down the unarmed captain, for the latter was alone. None

of his crewmen stood behind him and he was completely unprotected. Ned gave a quick glance toward the professor, but the latter frowned and shook his head and motioned for the harpooner to obey Nemo's orders.

It was not Aronnax's mute urging that induced Ned to do as he was told, but rather the fact that he was not yet quite ready to make his bid for freedom. There was still so much he had to learn about the operation of the *Nautilus!* Until he knew how to handle the vessel safely, he knew it was useless to attempt any escape. He shrugged and threw the sword and shield down with a clatter of defiance. Conseil followed the harpooner dutifully, still nursing his shoulder.

Nemo then turned his attention to Aronnax.

"I think I shall regret my softness in allowing that ruffian to live," he said in sinister tones. "Perhaps it is not too late to remedy my mistake."

Aronnax's heart skipped a beat. "You would not have another murder on your soul and conscience," he protested earnestly.

Nemo smiled his twisted smile. "You need not worry," he said. "Your friend is safe—but only because he is your friend. He is luckier than he knows."

It relieved Aronnax to be reminded how great a value the captain placed upon his good opinion. It must be great indeed, he thought, to put up with what must be a very disturbing element to the captain—the continued and open enmity of the whaler.

"As for what went on out there," Nemo gestured, "I feel no qualms. None! Please be convinced of that! If it be, as you say, murder, then I consider it amply justified." He continued, his voice rising with passion and emotion. "Is murder to be reserved for that evil group of usurpers who disguise their tyranny with high-sounding names and conduct their inhuman operations behind the pomp and trappings of legitimate political office? Are those who do the bidding of those evil butchers to be immune from my revenge?

"They took everything from me," he cried passionately. "Everything I loved in the world! I have never told you this, but they came one night and arrested my young wife and our small son. Why? Because I would not cooperate with them. I would not hand over the results of certain scientific experiments! To break my will they resorted to torture. Before my very eyes . . . my wife . . . my son. . . ." Something like a sob escaped between his clenched teeth. "And when I could not in my conscience give in to them . . . they put my loved ones cruelly to death."

He struggled to master his emotions as Aronnax watched helplessly, for once his heart completely captured by this tortured being.

Nemo continued hoarsely. "Still it was not enough. They subjected me to brutalities beyond your comprehension as a civilized man, Professor. But they could not break me. No agony on earth could loosen my tongue and force me to give them that which would help them extend their foul

dominion. At last they, too, became convinced of that. They threw my broken body into their loathsome dungeons to rot—but I did not die. I could not! My monstrous hatred would not allow it. My spirit of revenge fattened and grew as my body daily became stronger.

"How I came to be sent to Rorapandi I do not know. It was no doubt a mistake—one of those errors so prone to occur in organizations of their kind. When I found myself there I knew that fate had reserved me for something special. I was to be the instrument in whom all the resistance of the world would be realized. I would be the Messiah to awaken mankind to the terrible danger in which it stands! I shall first drive these barbarians from the high seas; then, when their vulnerability has been so demonstrated, I shall unite the free nations of the world behind my leadership and we shall wipe this criminal conspiracy from the face of the earth. Until then, every ship of theirs, or of any of the duped nations that support them, is fair game and must feel the concentrated power of my hatred."

His tirade was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of one of his officers into the salon. There was an urgency about the man which immediately arrested Nemo and put an end to his violence.

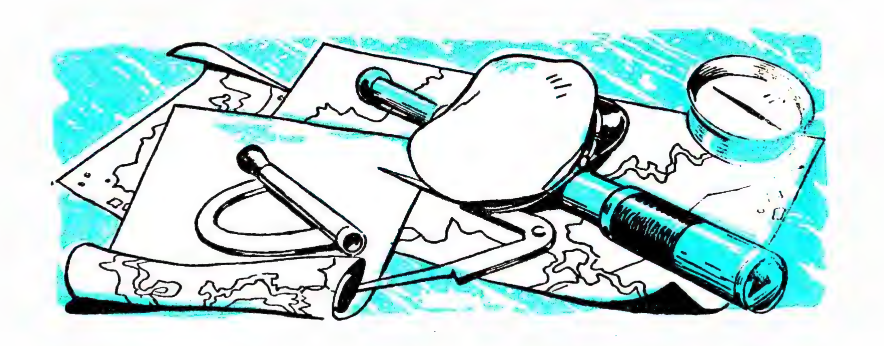
"What is it, Conti?" he asked quickly.

"Damage report, sir," replied the officer. "Rudder and starboard diving planes disabled."

Captain Nemo was instantly the cold man of action. "Muster a repair party at once and prepare the diving

equipment. We will make temporary repairs here."

Turning back to Aronnax, he bowed his head slightly. "If you'll excuse me, Professor," he said formally. Then to the officer, "I'll join you in the diving chamber."



CHAPTER 13

The Typhoon

The mechanical damage to the *Nautilus* was soon repaired, and a day's work in the salon by Ned and a detail of crewmen restored that room to its original splendor. Save for a torn painting and a few missing bottled specimens, nothing remained of the previous day's shambles. The *Nautilus* cruised serenely under shining tropical skies.

The destruction of the nitrate ship and the consequent unburdening by Nemo of his pent-up emotions to Aronnax had a very good effect upon their relationship. They sailed in calmer waters, and the professor now had the feeling that it might not be long before the precious secret of unlimited power would be his—and the world's.

Aronnax had taken to keeping a journal in which he carefully recorded everything he considered of scientific value, as well as personal observations. It never occurred to him that there might be prying eyes aboard—leastwise not in certain quarters. But it was this very diary which Conseil and Ned were discussing on a certain after-

noon a week or so later. The two were sunning themselves on the afterdeck of the submarine as she glided smoothly over glassy blue seas. The one thing the two men had in common, namely complete isolation from everyone else on board, had forced them into an ill-matched friendship.

"It was a shameful thing to do," Conseil was saying ruefully, "to get me to pry into his private journal. I did what you asked only because I told myself that the end justified the means."

"Of course it does, lad," Ned cut in. "It's for the professor's own good, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's what I argued. It is true that he must be saved from the hypnotic influence of that evil man."

"Well! Heave to, matie! What did you find out?"

"We are heading straight for Nemo's home base—an island called Vulcania."

Ned's face fell. He repeated the name. "Vulcania? That's a fine hunk of information!"

"You mean you never heard of it?" faltered Conseil.

"I might have known it!" continued Ned in disgust. "Naturally he'd pick on some scrubby atoll nobody ever heard of. There's hundreds of them in this man's ocean. Why, you could sail from here to tarnation and never raise them. Hundreds! Unless. . . ."

A gleam came into his intense blue eyes. He continued purposefully, "Unless a body could find the Old Man's private chart which he must keep somewhere in the chart room." He smacked the deck with his fist so hard that

Conseil winced sharply and drew back.

"You wouldn't dare!" whispered the Frenchman, fright flooding him again at the thought of his companion's recklessness.

"Just you watch me," Ned scoffed. "As a matter of fact, just you watch *us,* because you're going to be in on this party, too."

"Oh, no!" cried Conseil in quick dismay. "What if he catches us? You'll get us all killed!" His prominent eyes looked about wildly as though he expected the head of the dreaded captain to rise up accusingly from the sea before them.

"Simmer down, landlubber," growled Ned. "You don't have to carry on so. We'll pick the right time. It takes two to swing a prank like this one. One to watch—like you—and one who knows all about such things to do the locating—like me."

Conseil was silent. When he spoke again there was a hint of satisfaction in his voice. "I don't know why I am worrying about it," he said smugly. "The opportunity to get into the chart room will never arise. Of that I am certain."

Ned merely hooted at him, then added, "Everybody slips up sometime. Even Nemo. When that time comes, little Neddie will be johnny-on-the-spot. You'll see, laddie."

With a sinking heart, Conseil knew how right he was. It was only a matter of time before he would be sucked into another reckless attempt to gain their freedom.

It was the typhoon that was to give them their opportunity. The weather which had been deceptively calm began to show unmistakable signs of changing for the worse. On the horizon fine streaks of cirrus clouds were succeeded by towering masses of cumuli. Other low clouds began to pass swiftly by. The atmosphere was becoming white and misty. The swollen sea rose in huge billows. The barometer began to fall.

Captain Nemo and Aronnax were in the control room. The *Nautilus* was awash on the surface, proceeding fairly well despite the disturbance of the sea. A crewman came up from below.

"Glass still falling, sir," he reported.

His message seemed to have little effect on the captain. He looked out at the restless elements.

"Typhoon," Nemo said. Then, addressing the professor, he added, "I dare say you have never experienced one on the surface?"

"No," answered Aronnax, "although I have been through hurricanes in the Atlantic."

"Much the same thing," said Nemo, "except that the winds rotate clockwise here instead of counter-clockwise. There will be a tremendous amount of precipitation and, of course, you will find that a typhoon is a great deal more violent."

Aronnax noticed that a new excitement was beginning to possess Nemo. It was as though he were responding emotionally to the dramatic moodiness of the impending

storm. A sudden lurch reminded the professor of the danger in remaining surfaced.

"Are we not going to submerge as usual?" he asked.

"Not yet," replied Nemo. "Nature is too magnificent when she is in this mood. This is greater than all your man-made dramas or operas. I would not miss this performance for anything."

He produced two strong leather belts from a compartment.

"These will hold us steady," he said. Putting one of them around Aronnax, he snapped the two ends into place on the projecting ledge under the window, and then did the same for himself. Aronnax was aware that he was now braced powerfully against any sudden movement of the vessel. He resigned himself to remaining here and enjoying, if such a thing were possible, the now worsening storm.

He found himself dividing his admiration between the tempest and the extraordinary man who was now pitting himself against it.

The full fury of the storm was upon them. The howling of the wind and the crashing of the waves were a fearful sound. The *Nautilus,* at times lying over completely on its side, at other times standing straight up from the sea almost like a mast, rolled and pitched terrifyingly.

About five o'clock in the afternoon, a torrent of rain engulfed them. The typhoon blew ever stronger, and Aronnax began to feel some stirrings of fear. He put out his hand to touch the man beside him. He could not at first shake

Nemo from the trance into which he had retreated, but repeated tugs at his sleeve finally caused him to turn. The wildness in his eyes slowly ebbed and he shook his head reassuringly.

"Don't be afraid. A well-constructed hull can defy the worst the sea can give. The *Nautilus* is the strongest ship in the world."

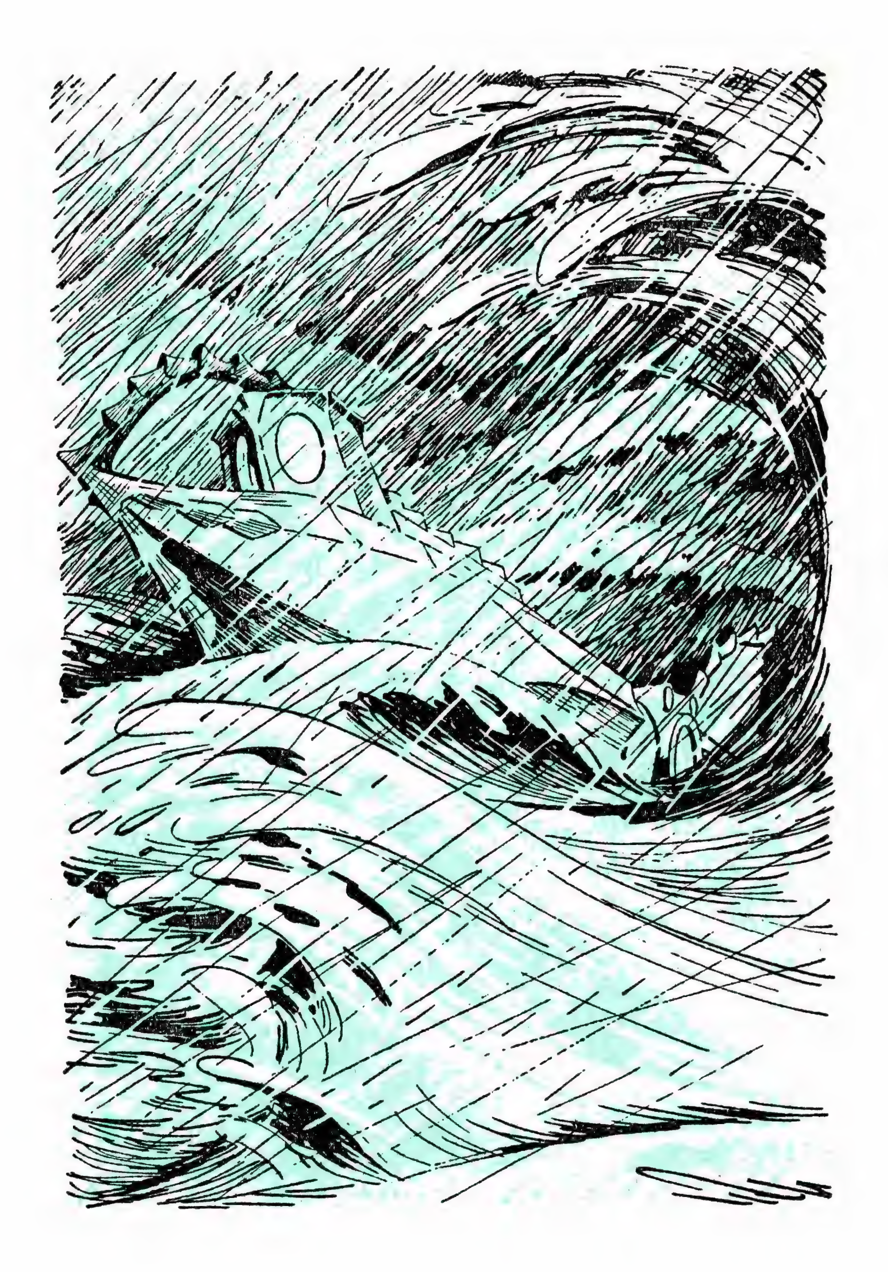
"He is right," thought the professor. "This is not a resisting structure. It is a spindle, obedient and movable, without rigging or masts, that braves the ocean's fury."

However, he studied the raging waves attentively, respectfully, wondering at their height. To add to the drama, the sky became streaked with lightning. It seemed the very air was afire. Aronnax could hardly bear the brightness of it. Yet, looking at Nemo, he saw the latter still stared out unblinking. The transported man seemed to be joining the spirit of the tempest. Terrible claps of thunder dominated the other noises of the storm. Then as the wind veered the torrential rain suddenly subsided.

Now came another frightening phenomenon. It seemed like a deluge of forked lightning.

"He is courting death," thought Aronnax, "a death worthy of him. Death by lightning!"

The *Nautilus,* pitching dreadfully, raised its long steel spur out of the water. It seemed to act as a lightning conductor. Long fiery streamers of sparks shot out from it. Aronnax began to feel real fear for the safety of the vessel. This egomaniac was putting all their lives in jeopardy while



he personally challenged the storm.

He shouted to the man beside him, "Submerge! Captain, in heaven's name, submerge!"

As Nemo looked around at him, there came an especially brilliant flare of lightning accompanied by a deafening crash of thunder. The ship shuddered and seemed to stop momentarily. The mesmerized look went out of Nemo's eyes. He shook himself and seized the speaking tube.

"Take her down! Thirty degrees!" he snapped.

Almost instantly came a voice over the turbulence of the typhoon.

"She won't answer, sir."

"Bring her around," cried Nemo. "She's broaching!"

Again came the reply, anxious, urgent. "Diving plane out of order. Seems to be fouling our steering gear. We're out of control, sir."

Once more came that fearful jarring from the rear of the vessel. It sounded as if something was slamming hard against the outside of the hull. Now drifted sidewise to the wind and the waves, the *Nautilus* heeled far over.

"Cut off the power," Nemo commanded. "Get set for emergency dive. Fill all tanks!"

As Aronnax prayed, the ship rocked slowly back to an even keel, then sickeningly continued to cant in the opposite direction until it seemed that surely this time it would not recover. The flickering lavender glare of lightning flashes lit up the control room, and jagged shafts of flame forked into the sea about them. It looked as though Nemo

had acted too late to save them from disaster.

Again, sluggishly, the *Nautilus* recovered. This time as they righted themselves, Aronnax noticed that the level of water outside was almost over the glass of the forward ports. At last they were submerging. But would it be fast enough? Down, down, sank the *Nautilus* slowly and steadily, while the professor waited apprehensively.

Even after the *Nautilus* seemed well submerged, she still rocked severely, although it was as nothing compared to her wild gyrations on the surface. At last, in this comparative quiet, the captain and the professor were able to unhook and remove their safety belts.

"It is still surprisingly rough down here," observed the professor.

"Yes," answered Nemo. "That is because these upper beds of the ocean have been so violently agitated. We shall have to sink deeper to find quiet waters."

Together they left the control room and Nemo led the way to his cabin. There Aronnax was amazed to see no evidence of destruction or disorder such as had followed the destruction of the nitrate ship.

Reading the professor's surprise correctly, Nemo explained. "Everything was tightly secured in anticipation of the typhoon," he said with satisfaction. "I doubt if we have lost so much as a single specimen bottle in the salon this time."

As Aronnax let himself down into a leather easy chair he noted that the movement of the *Nautilus* had eased

up almost completely. He looked at the dial on the wall.

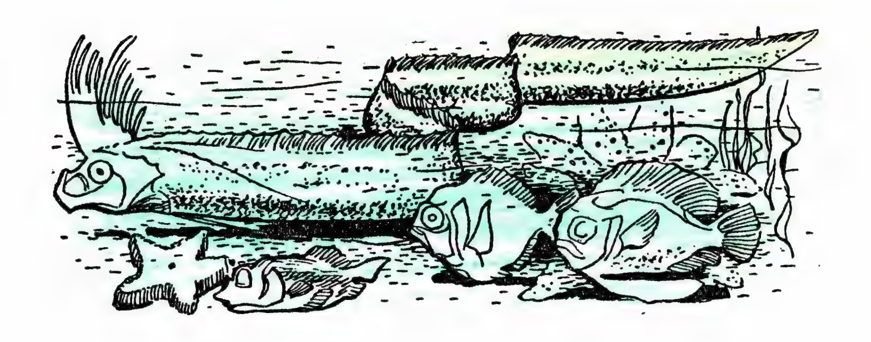
"We are thirty fathoms down," he read. "And still sinking?"

Nemo nodded. "Yes, but not much farther. It is not necessary." He, too, now dropped into a comfortable chair and thrust his long legs out, luxuriously. "Ah," he gloated, "what quiet, what silence, what peace! Who could tell here that a furious typhoon has been loosed on the surface of the ocean?"

Aronnax did not share the captain's obvious satisfaction. He felt exhausted physically and emotionally. He felt a vague sense of uneasiness, also. He was forced to admit that the mishap to the *Nautilus* had been somewhat of a disappointment. Some of the glamour of Nemo's complicated and wonderful craft had rubbed off. It was not, after all, invulnerable. It was at the mercy of the elements. For a moment he had a disturbing doubt about all of Nemo's accomplishments. Could any of them be worth all he was going through? He shook himself as if to throw off these defeatist thoughts.

"I must be more tired than I know," he said to himself.

From down the corridor came the plaintive notes of Ned Land's homemade guitar. Fleetingly the professor envied the harpooner's simple attitude toward life.



CHAPTER 14

Ned Fights Back

A thorough examination from outside the *Nautilus* revealed the extent of damage to her diving plane and rudder. In the chart room, Nemo, the mate, and the chief engineer were in earnest consultation.

"I do not know what caused the damage," the engineer was explaining, "but in my opinion it would be advisable to surface and proceed carefully to our base."

"No," answered Nemo firmly. "We cannot risk it. Our safety has always depended upon the perfect functioning of our vessel. Suppose we are intercepted and surprised by an enemy warship? No, we will make repairs, here and now."

"Very well, sir," agreed the engineer. "Then we will completely replace the diving fins."

"It will require all hands, sir," put in the mate.

"Yes," said Nemo, and turning to the mate, he ordered, "Organize the work party. However, I think it expedient for someone to remain on watch inside. I suggest yourself.

I would like to supervise the replacement personally."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the mate and he hurried off to carry out his orders.

There was soon a great bustle of activity. The ship rang with commands and metallic noises. Men emerged from the tool room carrying huge wrenches and crowbars and headed for the diving cell. Presently the entire work party was outside the ship, proceeding with the repairs.

The mate listened awhile to the dull thudding sounds that were issuing from the rear of the *Nautilus*. Then glancing toward the forward section, where he supposed Conseil and Ned Land to be, he proceeded aft. Passing through the salon and seeing no one there, he was reassured that both men were remaining in their quarters as they had been ordered to do. Had he been more suspicious and really searched the salon, he would have found Ned Land lying flat and thus carefully concealed on the settee in one of the viewport wells.

When the mate had left the salon, Ned quietly got up from his hiding place. He went over to the doorway by the pipe organ and listened for a while. Having satisfied himself that the mate was well out of the way, he proceeded quickly to the chart room. It was open! The moment of opportunity had arrived. Ned lost no time.

He hurried to their cabin to alert Conseil. He found him lying in his bunk looking seasick and utterly miserable. Each succeeding danger had left the little man a bit more demoralized. He dreaded this new adventure and wished

hopelessly that he could find some way to avoid it. But Ned was ruthless. He needed Conseil's help and was determined to get it.

He pulled Conseil up to a sitting position. "All right, Frenchy," he whispered, "rise and shine. The great moment is here. Everybody but the mate is outside. Even the professor went along to watch. Up, laddie, up!"

"Please go away and let me die in peace," moaned Conseil and sank back slowly on his bunk.

"None of your malingering! On your feet!" muttered Ned fiercely and yanked Conseil forcibly out of the bunk. He thrust his big brown fist under the Frenchman's nose.

"What'll it be, matey? This? Or do you sail along friendly-like and do as you're told?"

Conseil had no choice. He gulped and nodded weakly in token of surrender.

"Now that's more like it, shipmate," said Ned heartily. "Easy does it. We've only got to keep our blinkers peeled for the mate—who's aft right now and out of sight. Come on, we're shoving off!"

He opened the door quickly but quietly, peered aft, then motioned Conseil to follow him. They hurried down the corridor to the forbidden chart room.

Ned opened the door and entered. He looked around appraisingly. He had seldom been in it, never alone. Significantly it was kept locked except when in use by Nemo and those he entrusted with navigation. Now its secrets were his for the taking.

Bidding Conseil stand guard at the door, he went expertly to work. One after another, he picked up the rolled-up charts and scanned them quickly before replacing them in their exact locations when they failed to give him the information he was seeking.

"Vulcania. Vulcania." He muttered the name over and over under his breath, as he pulled out more charts. Straits of Magellan, Baffin Land, Sargasso Sea, Sea of Marmora, Strait of Tsushima—it was a tour of the known world—but no Vulcania!

Suddenly Ned and Conseil were petrified as a strange snuffling sound reached their ears, accompanied by bumpings. It came from somewhere within the room.

"We are lost," gasped Conseil, his eyes almost starting from their sockets.

But Ned's tension evaporated in a sigh of relief.

"Aaah," he said, "it's only Snoopy, the seal. I forgot about him." He pointed. "They keep him in that compartment right off this room. Let him out before he starts yapping."

"Perhaps we had better leave him there," suggested Conseil timidly.

"Let him out," snapped Ned.

Unnerved and apprehensive, Conseil hurried to open the door of the seal's compartment. The sleek, shiny creature came bounding out with a glad bark of recognition for Ned, making straight for his friend.

Ned's forefinger flew to his lips in a gesture of silence.

"Sh-h-h, Snoopy boy!" he whispered. Then he flung at Conseil, "Quick! Shut the door to the passageway. The mate will hear him!"

Conseil obeyed as the seal capered about the harpooner's legs, snuffling up at him and uttering quick little grunts of happiness.

"That's all right, boy," soothed Ned. "Nice boy—down—down—sh-h-h-h!" But his beloved voice only seemed to heighten the animal's joy, and the barks grew louder.

Conseil watched helplessly. "Do something!" cried Ned, hoarsely.

In desperation, the Frenchman grabbed at the slippery creature to try to restrain it forcibly. Snoopy only regarded this as part of the game and barked his pleasure.

"No, no, you must not!" Conseil scolded anxiously. He tried putting both his hands around the seal's snout to muffle him. Snoopy still failed to get the idea and went into such violent galumphings that Conseil had to let go. He was promptly rewarded by an even sharper yelp of joy. Both men winced and looked at each other in dismay.

"I think he wants to play," Conseil whispered in despair. "What shall we do?"

"Get the ball I made for him. It's in our cabin. Lively!"

As Conseil hurried to get the plaything, Ned attempted to pet his playmate, but Snoopy avoided him nimbly.

"Pipe down, you silly beast!" Ned implored. "Do you want to get your pal keelhauled?"

Conseil returned with a ball which Ned had put together

out of cloth stuffed with seaweed. "I could hear him bark—even over the hammering—" he panted.

"Throw him the ball! That's what he likes," Ned ordered. Conseil tossed the gaily colored ball to the seal who caught it neatly on his nose as he had been taught. He waddled about happily balancing it while Ned went back to work on the charts. However, the game did not end there. Waddling over to Conseil, Snoopy dropped the ball in front of him and began to slap his flippers together and emit a series of pleading yelps.

"Christopher Columbus!" gritted Ned. "Now he wants his reward. He wants a fish!"

"But his food is not kept here," Conseil almost whined.

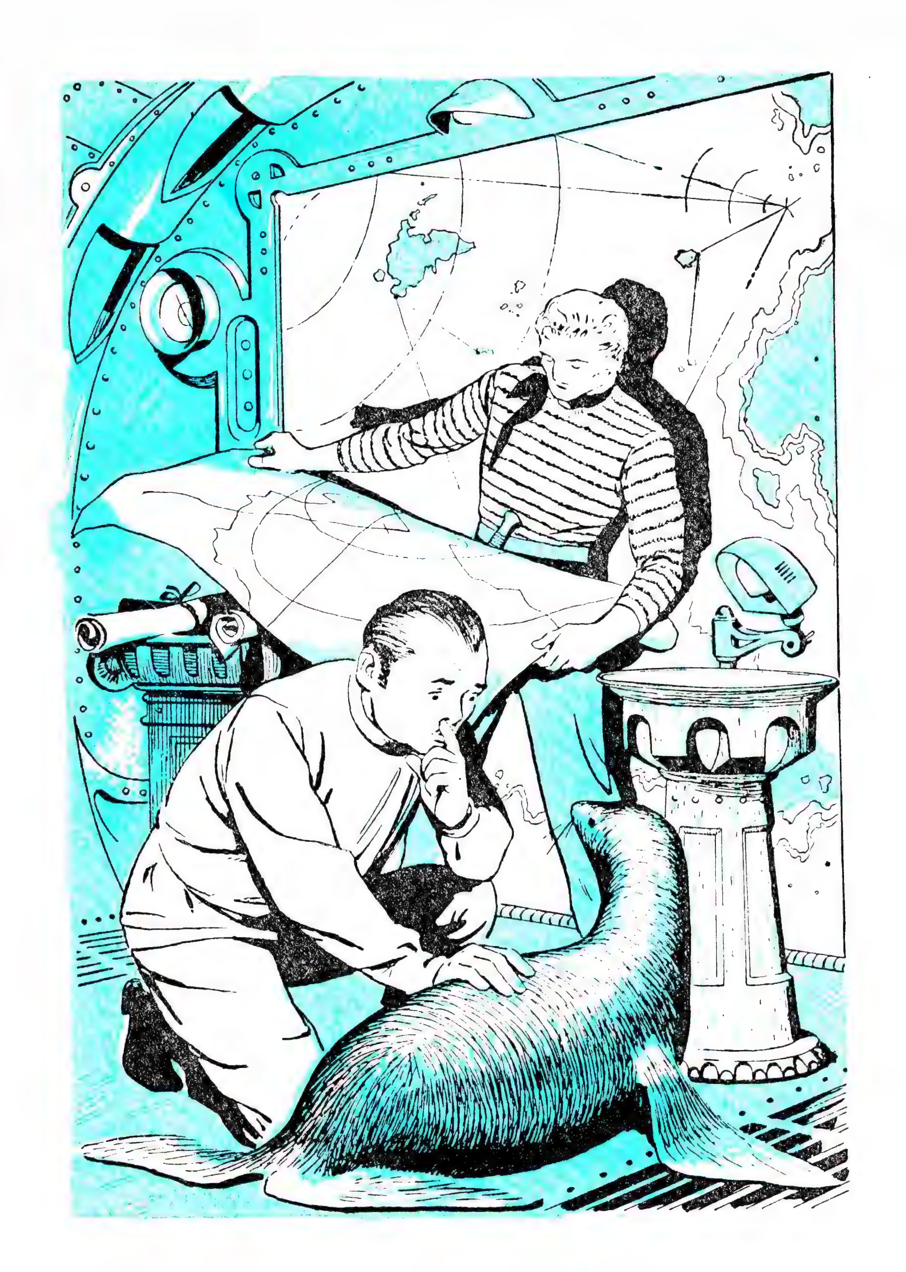
"I know, I know," replied Ned impatiently and he shushed the animal so fiercely that it stopped its commotion and cocked its head at him curiously.

"There's absolutely nothing for a seal to eat in here," Conseil complained. "Maybe we can take his mind off it?"

"Sure," said Ned sarcastically. "Offer him a cigar. That might do it. But do something, *anything,* to keep him quiet!" He turned back once more to the charts in a fever of impatience.

Shaking his head doubtfully, the literal-minded Conseil prepared to do Ned's bidding. He opened Captain Nemo's humidor and took out one of the long cigars in it.

"I really don't think he will like it," he murmured to himself, as he offered the cigar to Snoopy. To his amazement, the creature snapped at it eagerly and swallowed it



down whole. Then he slapped his flippers together gratefully.

"He's eaten it!" Conseil goggled. "He's eaten the cigar!"

Ned turned his head briefly from his work, "Well, sure! They are made of some kind of seaweed and heaven knows what else. If he likes them, keep feeding them to him while I get on with this. But make 'em last."

Whatever it was that the cigars contained, there was no doubt that Snoopy considered them very tasty and a most acceptable substitute for fish. Conseil doled them out as slowly as he could, tossing one to the seal whenever a particularly loud snuffle seemed to anticipate an impending bark. The cigars were half gone when Ned called out hoarsely, "I've got it!"

"Good," whispered Conseil in relief and he rewarded the seal with two cheroots at once in celebration.

The harpooner had spread a chart on the table and he now quickly copied down the location of Vulcania. He ran his eyes rapidly around the rest of it.

"What luck!" he cried. "Here's a record of our course. This marks our position yesterday at six bells. And here's Vulcania! Thirty-six south, one sixty-four north—it's all here." He wrote this down swiftly and replaced the chart.

Ned's face was agleam with satisfaction. He snatched the humidor from Conseil. "Take a sounding out in the hall, laddie, and see if it's all clear."

As Conseil obeyed and slowly opened the door to the passageway, Ned lured the seal over to the door of his com-

partment and threw a handful of cigars inside. "Go fetch them, boy," he ordered, and the seal bounded clumsily over the raised doorsill into his room. Ned shut the door after him. He swiftly appraised the room for any telltale signs of unlawful entry, and seeing none, he put the depleted humidor in its proper place, picked up the seal's ball, and left the room with Conseil at his heels.

Out in the hall, with the chart room door closed, they were safe. Unless Captain Nemo were to miss some of his cigars, he would never suspect there had been an investigation of his private papers.

The repairs had been made, the terrible typhoon had passed, and now the *Nautilus* was heading southwest toward her secret haven.

Ned Land was alone in his cabin. Six squares of paper, on each of which was lettered a roughly printed message, lay on the hinged wall desk before him. He proceeded to write the seventh. Dotting the final exclamation point, he picked up this last square and read it to himself with a satisfied smile on his face: *Professor Aronnax and party are held prisoners on underwater ship which is heading for home base at longitude 36 degrees nineteen minutes south and latitude 164 degrees 27 minutes west. Send help!*

He clucked his approval, then gathering up all the messages, he thrust them under the pillow of his bunk. He left his cabin and went forward to the salon.

Conseil, who was reading there, looked up expectantly

at the sound of his footsteps, hoping as he always did that it was his neglectful friend Aronnax. Seeing it was only the trouble-producing harpooner, the Frenchman nodded perfunctorily and returned to his book.

"Are you alone?" asked Ned with a conspiratorial air as his eyes searched every nook of the large room.

Conseil answered with another quick nod. He was in no mood to be dragged into another of Ned's dangerous schemes.

"Good!" replied Ned with spirit. "You can help me take a few of these specimen bottles back to our cabin."

This was not at all what Conseil had expected. "You wish to study them, eh?" he said in pleased tones. "Good. I will help you select those of especial interest."

"Five or six is enough for a starter," said Ned. He was already standing before the glittering array of jars and bottles which contained the sea oddities. "I'll take three and you can lug a couple more. And let's try not to get caught tampering with the Old Man's seafood collection."

While Conseil thoughtfully hesitated to be sure to select the most unusual and interesting, Ned picked up three at random and started out of the salon. Back in their quarters, both men set their bottles down upon the desk.

"Now this is an extremely rare Nudibranch," began Conseil admiringly as he picked up one of his bottles and held it up to the light. "Any museum would pay well for it."

"Good," said Ned casually, as he went to work on the stopper of another jar. "Uncork it and dump the nude-

watcha-may-call-it into the sink. That's where all these moldy oysters are going as soon as I can open them up."

Conseil was horrified. "You are surely joking," he cried and held the jar protectively behind his back. "These are priceless! What kind of a childish prank are you up to now?"

"Priceless is right," replied Ned scornfully. "The bottles—not the preserved seafood! I aim to put something else in those priceless bottles. Something that'll tell the whole world where we are going. Exact directions."

"Messages—in bottles?" stammered Conseil. "Why, my dear fellow, that went out of fashion with Robinson Crusoe."

"Okay," sneered Ned. "Tossing messages off in bottles may be old stuff to you but in my experience I've heard of it working and I'm going ahead with it."

Conseil put his jar down with finality.

"I cannot stop you from this act of vandalism," he said stiffly, "but I will not be a party to it. At least not this phase of it. Oooh!" he groaned as Ned poured an object from his jar into the sink. "There went a Flabellina Oculina—lost to science forever."

"Don't pity the poor thing," jibed Ned. "It's all in a good cause."

As Conseil sat glumly on the bunk, the harpooner opened and emptied each bottle in turn. The Frenchman winced each time one of the precious specimens went gurgling down the drain. Finally all the bottles were cleaned out and ready for their messages.

Ned viewed his work appreciatively. "Well, there they are," he chuckled happily, "our little keys to freedom. Right now I can see Meg waiting for me on the wharf at Hong Kong when the news gets picked up."

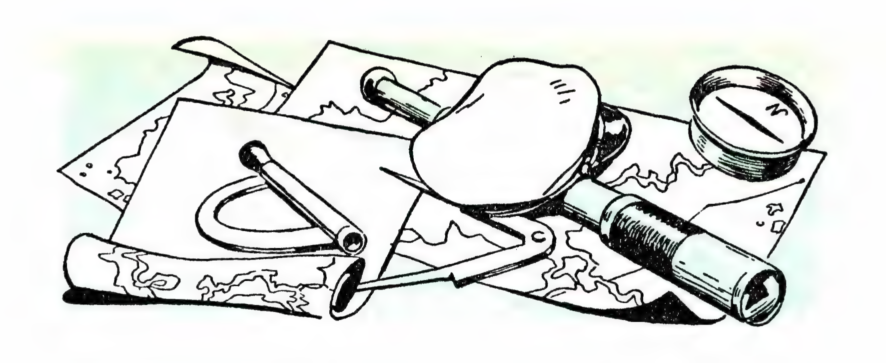
Ned had planned to dispatch his messages at different intervals so as to increase their range of coverage. The first of them went overboard that very night. He managed to sneak unobserved up to the rear hatchway opening while the *Nautilus* was proceeding on the surface to replenish her air supply.

In the bright tropical starlight, he could make out the form of a crewman amidships. Ahead, in the dimly lighted control room he could see Nemo and the professor moving about. Raising himself a little higher, he drew back his arm and quickly let his bottle fly. Its splash was drowned in the sound of the rushing waves alongside. Silently he withdrew from the hatchway.

Each succeeding night, he repeated this maneuver successfully until all seven messages had been launched. Then he took to extending his operations by pilfering more bottles and writing more messages. He had sent about twenty of them flying into the sea and would have continued had not Professor Aronnax almost caught him stealing a bottle. This scare made him call a halt, wisely. All there was left to do now was to pray that one of the messages would be picked up by a friendly ship. And, of course, that Captain Nemo would not take a notion to go browsing about in

his plundered marine zoology collection!

At any rate, Ned felt a little more satisfied. He had something to hope for. At least he was not a lamb being led unresisting to the slaughter. He had resisted!



CHAPTER 15

Free at Last

Danger soon called to Captain Nemo again. It seemed to Aronnax that there was an ominous pattern to the sequence of accidents that was shadowing the *Nautilus*. Was it pointing to some inevitable tragedy, he wondered, that would prevent him from ever getting at the secret he was so avidly pursuing?

They were off the coast of an uncharted atoll in the South Seas near New Guinea. Nemo had reason to believe an enemy warship might be lurking here, having intercepted some cryptic messages from an unknown ship. Being now in that part of the globe which held his hideaway, the island of Vulcania, the captain could not tolerate the presence of his hated enemies so close to home. He had scoured the seas in that vicinity in vain. He had found no warship, but he did find trouble, although of a different sort.

The *Nautilus* was proceeding at a moderate speed. Nemo and Aronnax were in the control room, the former scanning the lush green shore with his spyglass, the latter studying

the foam-smothered reefs around the *Nautilus* uneasily. He did not have to be a sailor to realize that they were in dangerous waters. Several times the submarine slid past deadly coral formations that he was sure could have torn the keel from her had she run afoul of them.

It did not come as a great surprise to the professor, therefore, when a sharp shock sent him sprawling. When he had recovered himself, he realized that the *Nautilus* was no longer moving.

"We have met with an accident," he cried.

"An incident," Nemo corrected, coolly. He seemed undisturbed by the jolt and its consequences.

"We've run aground, sir," reported the man at the helm.

"Yes," answered Nemo quietly. Then, "All astern—full!" he commanded.

There followed a strong steady vibration of the ship which brought no result. Although the engines strained at their fullest, it soon became apparent that the *Nautilus* was hard and fast on the rocks.

Two miles away on the starboard side was the island, stretching from north to west like an outstretched arm. Toward the south and east some coral, left by the ebb, showed above the water. The ship had run aground in one of those seas where the tides do not fluctuate to any great degree. It did not leave much hope of floating her off. The professor was frankly concerned.

Noticing his worried frown, Nemo reassured him with a mocking smile. "The *Nautilus* is not lost, Professor. She

will float again to take you to Vulcania, and to all the marvels that you wish so much to see—and to know about."

This implied promise that on reaching Vulcania he might learn all he wished to know about the captain's secrets only accentuated the professor's anxiety.

"But the tides are not very strong in the Pacific," he worried. "We both know that. How then are you to float off? Unless you can lighten your ship sufficiently?" he added hopefully.

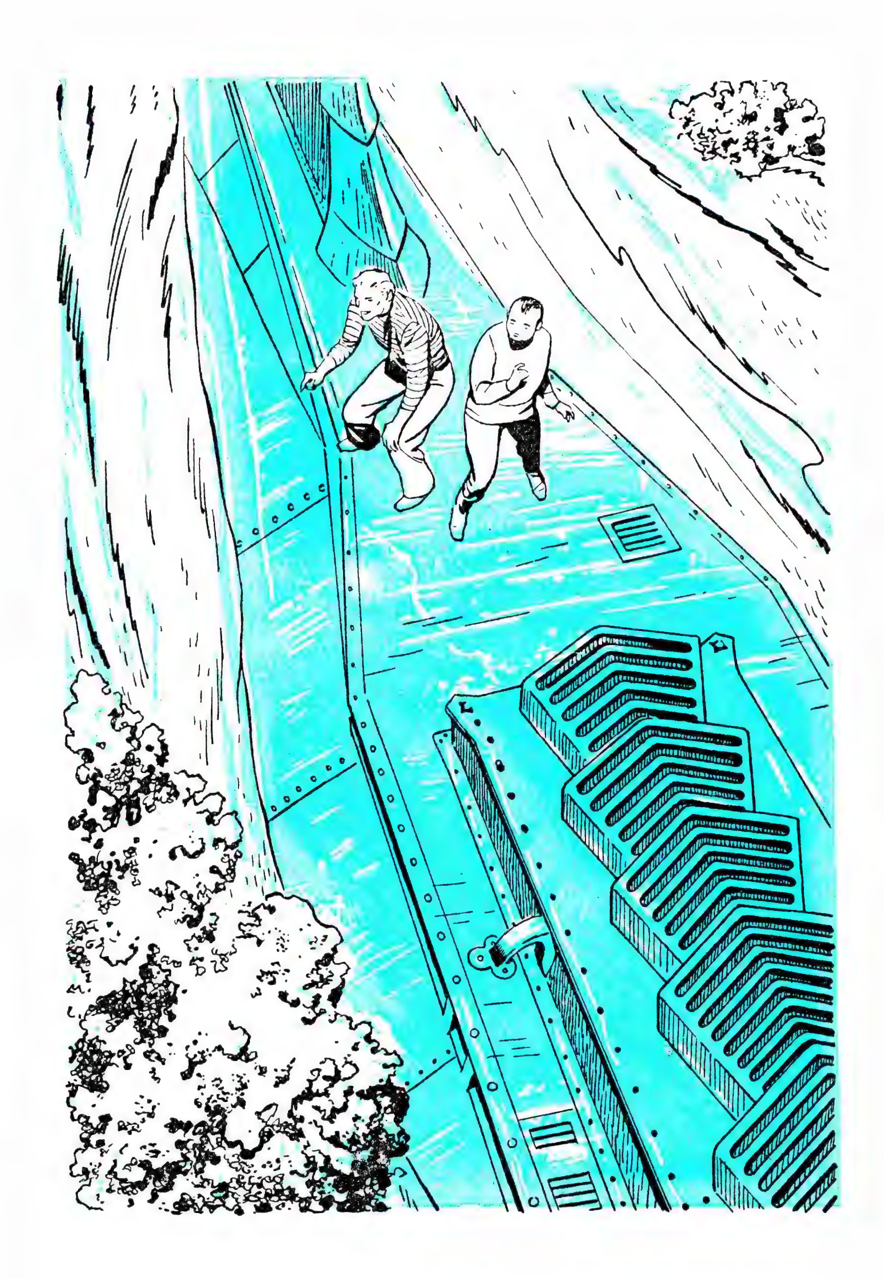
"It will not be necessary to do the latter," answered Nemo. "As for floating her, while you are quite right about the Pacific tides, it so happens that in these straits there is still over a yard and a half of difference between high and low water. That may not be enough to do the job," he continued, "but in a few days the moon will be full and the additional pull on the tide will be sufficient to float us free. You may count on it, Professor!"

He looked out of the rear window to the control room.

"I see your two friends have already come on deck for a look," he added. "Shall we go also?"

Aronnax followed Nemo's gaze and saw Ned and Conseil peering over the side of the *Nautilus* and talking animatedly. Even at such a distance he could almost feel their excitement and sense the harpooner's wicked delight in this new mishap to the submarine.

Ned was indeed gloating. "Believe me, Frenchy," he was saying, "this hunk of iron will never budge off this reef. I can see those little coral varmints beginning to wall her up



with their cement already. It couldn't be better!"

"If the ship is lost, can we get off safely?" questioned Conseil, looking down into the turbulent waters and nibbling at his thumbnail anxiously.

Ned pointed to the island. "Nothing to it, laddie-buck." He was terribly excited by the potentialities of their situation. It all seemed made to order for their escape. "Why, it's only a harpoon's toss away! Land! Land, with trees on it! And under those trees, critters! Critters with feathers and fur! Beasties walking and flying around with cutlets and chops and stew meat hanging all over them!" He smacked his lips in anticipation. "I wouldn't care if it was roast loin of tiger, just so long as it was good red meat and no more of this sea slop."

"Yes, it would be nice," agreed Conseil wistfully. "A nice tender *bifteck-grillade!"*

"I'd hop in right now and swim for it except that it's a bit roughish. It won't be long anyhow until they abandon ship, then you and me can ride in style to that island. Matey, I'm telling you, things are really beginning to look up for us!"

He looked around as Aronnax and the captain came out on deck and stopped close by. He made a motion for Conseil to be quiet while he tried to eavesdrop on what they were saying.

"You still think we will float off in a few days?" asked Aronnax. Nemo nodded and Ned waggled his eyebrows at Conseil significantly. Then, as they continued to listen,

Nemo said a completely unexpected thing:

"It is only about two miles over to that island, Professor. The dinghy could get there without any trouble. Would you care to make the trip?"

Ned's blue eyes went wide with anticipation, then, as Aronnax answered, he frowned with disgust and disbelief.

"Thank you; no, Captain," said the professor. "I'd rather not. If you will excuse me, I do not feel up to it. However, if it will interfere with your plans in any way I would reconsider."

Nemo cut him off with a note of scorn. "I am not in the least interested in setting foot on that island, believe me, Professor. No, I meant for you to go if it would please you. I would have two of my crewmen take you. But since you don't care about it—" He broke off to throw a question at the crewman who had approached and stood at attention. "You have the report?"

"Everything operational, sir. No leaks or structural damage."

"Good," said the captain, and he and Aronnax turned to go back to the control room.

Ned turned to Conseil and whispered fiercely to the Frenchman:

"Imagine him throwing away a chance like that! The professor must be losing his ballast." He kicked out at the deck in suppressed rage. "Blast it," he growled, "what wouldn't I give for a chance like that!"

Conseil could not help baiting his companion. "Well, why don't you ask the captain if you can go to the island?" he asked blandly.

"Belay your uncalled-for sarcastical remarks," snarled Ned. Then of a sudden his whole expression changed. "Eh?" he asked as though addressing himself. "Why in tarnation don't I? He can only say no. Maybe if I ask his nibs real polite-like? By harry, I'll do it!"

Ned hurried after Nemo, who stopped at his approach. Putting on his most engaging look, his bronze face wreathed in smiles, Ned Land began, "Beg pardon, Captain, I couldn't help overhearing what you told the professor here. I was just wondering, sir, why I couldn't kind of go in his place. It's the meat, Captain," he went on hurriedly. "I'm craving real game, if you know what I mean. I ain't saying seafood ain't tasty and wholesome, you understand, sir, but a side of fresh venison grilled over red-hot coals would be mighty agreeable to me, sir, that it would."

As Nemo stared at him without expression, Ned had a sudden inspiration.

"Conseil here could come along with me to collect some specimens—take notes and all like that. Real scientific. You needn't spare any of your men. I'll row. I've got a good strong back."

He stopped and waited for Nemo to give his verdict. When the captain finally spoke, it was not too encouraging.

"You mean you have a good strong desire to escape," he said curtly.

Ned's face beamed his protestation. He tried to look noble and true and hurt, all in one. "I'm no deserter, sir," he said loudly. "I'll give you my hand on it. Yes, sir, I'll swear by my tattoo." So saying he laid two fingers reverently upon the cryptic snake-wreathed heart etched on his opposite arm and rolled his eyes heavenward.

The absurd gesture almost wrung a smile of amusement from the taciturn captain. Aronnax was on the point of daring to put in a good word for the eager harpooner, when Nemo said unexpectedly, "There's really no reason why you cannot go. I run no risk of your taking French leave of us. You see, the natives on that island happen to be cannibals. And I assure you they eat liars with the same gusto as they do honest men."

Ned looked breathless with hope as Nemo added, "Permission granted! But let me advise you to remain at all times on the beach."

"Right you are, sir!" Ned was bursting. He jerked a thumb toward Conseil. "Can he come, too?"

"Yes," answered Nemo. "It will be an added security, for I know he will see to it that you return. *Monsieur* Conseil would not dream of abandoning us for the questionable security of a cannibal's stomach." Then he gave the order, "Break out the dinghy. These men are going ashore, alone."

He turned to leave. "Pray do nothing foolhardy, my friend," Aronnax murmured earnestly.

Ned Land did not answer him, but gave all his attention to stifling Conseil's frantic objections at being included

against his will in the hazardous undertaking.

"Why did you do this to me?" the latter asked plaintively. "I have no wish to jump from this frying pan into a cannibal's fire. You had no right!"

"Be quiet, you fool," Ned answered angrily. "Who said anything about escaping? I tell you it's the fresh meat I'm after. Although, laddie," his mood changed, and a sly twinkle came into his eyes, "cannibals or no, there may be females in that jungle—pretty little brown darlings with flowers in their hair—to dance for a fellow and bring him dainty tidbits to eat. Ahhhh!" He melted in ecstasy.

"But they are cannibals," Conseil said with a shudder. "The captain said they were."

"Bah!" was Ned's scornful rejoinder. "Can't you see that it's just Nemo's little fable to throw the fear into us? Don't tell me that you were taken in by it! Come on, snap out of your funk, matey. We'll have the time of our lives!"

Conseil had little choice but to agree, for Ned Land was his only friend aboard. But he gave in with the gravest misgivings. Ned's hearty back-slap did not reassure him in the least.

While the crewmen were breaking out the dinghy, Ned asked for a musket. To his surprise, he was given one, together with five rounds of ammunition and a hatchet.

The turbulence of the water around the reef which held the *Nautilus* fast made launching difficult, but finally, to the harpooner's delight, he was rowing toward the white shore line that beckoned so invitingly.

The perilous trip in the small skiff was as frightening an experience to the timid little Frenchman as any he had yet encountered. He sat glued to the stern seat, gripping the gunwhales until his knuckles showed white. His face was ashen and his eyes glassy. He did not relax until they were well past the breakers and coasting in on smooth waters.

Ned gave an exultant laugh as the boat grated on the beach. "Didn't think I was going to drown you, did you, Frenchy?" he jeered as he jumped over the side to pull the pinnace high and dry. Then he stood, his face toward the lush green jungle, his feet spread apart and his head thrown back, taking deep breaths.

"Ahhh! Smell it," he said. "Sweet as an angel's kiss!"

Conseil clambered out of the boat stiffly to stand beside him. The island did not make him feel in the least poetical.

"It feels strange to stand on solid ground," said Conseil. "I can feel the earth rocking beneath me," he added in alarm. "Can it be an earthquake?"

"No, no," explained Ned. "You've still got your sea legs. You'll be all right after we're under way awhile."

"Oh, I shall not go very far from the boat," said Conseil. "I intend to stay right here on the beach."

Ned turned upon him angrily. "You mean to say you're not going to escape with me?" he demanded.

Conseil on his part was equally indignant. "I did not agree to any such thing," he said firmly. "And I am very surprised to know that you would go back on your solemn word to Captain Nemo."

"That maniac!" retorted Ned with scorn. "It's like giving my word to the devil. It meant nothing!"

"Perhaps—to you," replied Conseil, "but I consider that I still have obligations to Professor Aronnax. I could not think of leaving him."

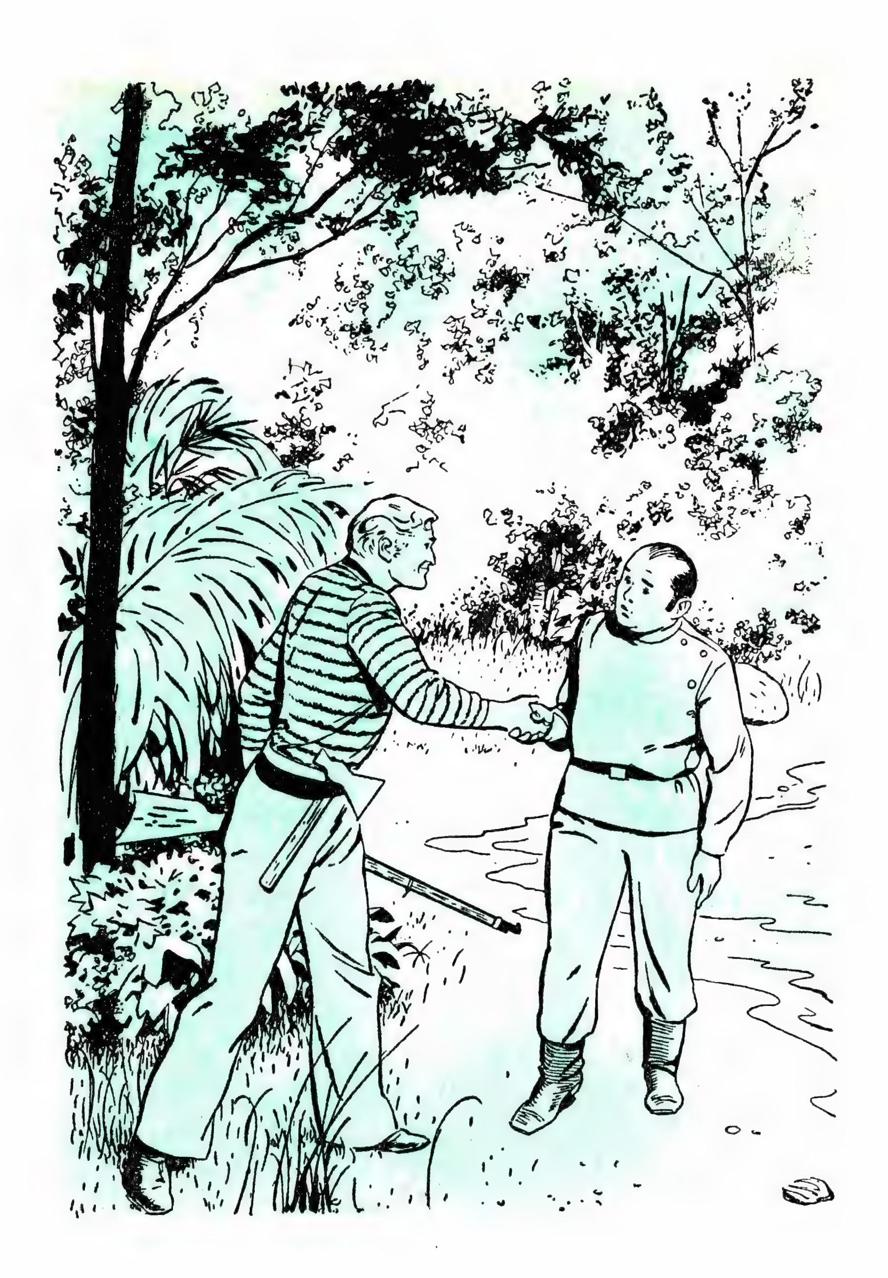
Ned was bitter. "The professor! That dreamy bloke. Making friends with Nemo. Talk! Talk! Talk! Do something big for the world!" He spat contemptuously. "Bilge! That's what I say." He spun Conseil halfway around to face toward the jungle. "There's the world, laddie. Straight through that jungle. We'll head for a port and in a jiffy we'll have them hunting for Nemo with gunboats. What do you say? I could sure do with a partner."

Conseil shook his head stubbornly. "I am sorry. You'll have to send an extra gunboat for the professor and me." He added, hastily, "Oh, I don't really mean that you should not go. I know full well what freedom means to a man like you and I am not going to try to dissuade you."

Conseil's unusual firmness and especially his unflurried demeanor now convinced Ned that he could not shake the Frenchman's decision. Nothing would make him abandon the professor, and Ned admitted his failure with a little shrug of indifference.

"Well, I'd better shove off. I can feel a telescope boring in my back from out seaward." He turned to take a last look at the iron prison which had been so irksome to him.

Then he held out his hand to Conseil who gripped it strongly, saying, "Good luck, my friend."



"*Bon voyage,* as you Frenchies say. See you in Saigon." With these words, Ned started toward the jungle.

"Watch out for cannibals," Conseil called after him, in a last anxious warning.

Ned turned, smiling, and reassuringly patted his musket. He turned once again at the edge of the jungle to wave his hand. Then he was gone.

Conseil was much saddened by Ned's departure. Despite the fact that the two men had little in common, Ned had been his only friend on the *Nautilus* after the professor had abandoned him for the captain. He went back to the boat and sat on it, facing the jungle. He rather hoped that the harpooner might change his mind or find the difficulties too great and turn back.

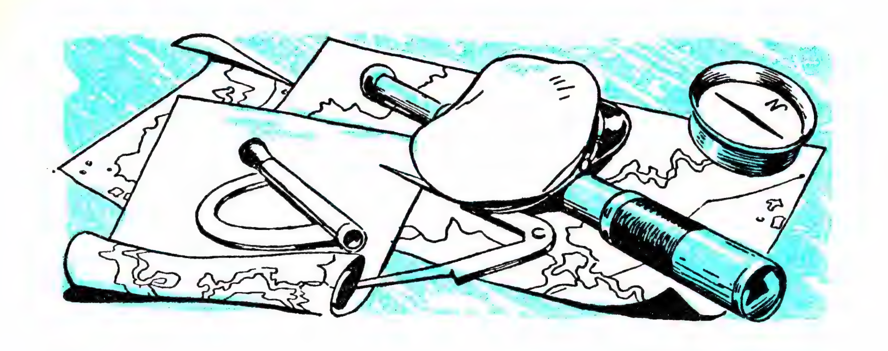
He had been sitting there for quite a while when he was struck by a terrible thought. Neither he nor Ned had remembered that he could not row well enough to take the skiff back through the breakers. He sprang to his feet and dashed toward the spot where the harpooner had disappeared. He called loudly, then listened for a reply. But all that came back to him were the cries of the strange, brightly colored birds flashing about in the trees and scolding him for invading their privacy. He did not dare go into the jungle after Ned. He continued to shout until he was hoarse but it was no use. No answer came. He was abandoned—marooned!

He made his way back to the boat and sat down disconsolately. Then another thought struck him, like a blow in

the face. It was unlikely that a seaman of Land's experience would have failed to take into account the facts of the return to the *Nautilus*. The dreadful truth was that Ned Land had been willing to barter Conseil's life for his personal freedom.

Bitterly now he knew why his shouts for help had remained unanswered. Naturally the villain would ignore them! It shocked him deeply to think that anyone pretending friendship could be so callous and cruel. He sat on the pinnace, brooding and wondering what was to become of him. He knew there was no other small boat on the *Nautilus* to pick him up.

How long he was prey to his dismal thoughts he did not know. But suddenly he sat up straight and looked toward the jungle. Distinct and clear above the sounds of the sea and the cries of the birds, he had heard a shot!



CHAPTER 16

Cannibals!

Actually, when Ned Land had plunged into the tropical wilderness he had decided that it would be better not to use his musket. The fact that he found himself almost immediately on a trail of sorts indicated the possibility of a native population. Until he found out whether these were friendly or not, he would do nothing to attract attention.

It annoyed him therefore when he heard Conseil's shouts from far behind him. He cursed the Frenchman for a nervous old woman and continued to push his way steadily forward. When the cries became more frantic it occurred to him that maybe Conseil had become involved with hostile natives. He stopped to listen a moment but could make nothing of the cries that reached him.

To do Ned justice, the real reason for the Frenchman's hysterical outburst did not occur to him. He gave some consideration to the idea of going back, but argued to himself that if Conseil was in trouble with cannibals, it would not help any if he joined his friend in the soup kettle. So

he continued on along the jungle trail.

By and by the cries stopped altogether and there was nothing to interfere with Ned's enjoyment of his new-found freedom. Actually, he had no plan for escape other than to put as much distance as possible between himself and the *Nautilus* while it was still daylight. So great was his pleasure in his liberty, in fact, that he was not disturbed even when he lost all sense of direction. It was impossible to make out the position of the sun through the solid ceiling of green above him, and he had no compass.

By and by he came to a spot in the jungle where there was a mirrorlike pond fed by a crystal clear brooklet. He threw himself down and drank deeply. After he had drunk his fill, he lay quietly, enjoying the beauty and peace of the spot.

And then, in the reflected greenery, among the blotches of flaming hibiscus he saw something that should not be there. It was a human face, hideously painted and grinning, with sharp white teeth. He seized his weapon and sprang to his feet. Where the face should have been, in the surrounding bush, there was nothing. Could it have been an illusion? Was he being spied upon? Followed? In an instant his paradise had become a deadly trap. He whirled around, looking in all directions to ascertain if he were surrounded. A stone whistled past his head and splashed into the water.

Instinctively he leaped behind the bole of a palm tree and peered out in the direction from which the missile had

come. A spear thudded into the tree with sickening nearness. In an instant he had made a decision. He would not stay there to be cut down—he would head back to the beach and the safety of the ocean.

Another spear sang past the tree and crashed into the growth behind him. That triggered him into action. He darted from behind the tree toward the path by which he had come. It was not hard to find since his passing had left a weal of broken and trampled vegetation.

Then before him he saw one of his attackers. Standing squarely in his path, shield in front of him, spear poised for throwing—a naked, painted menace, blocking his avenue of escape! He stopped long enough to aim and fire just as the savage hurled his spear. The spear went far wide of its mark; Ned Land's musket ball did not. Without a sound the brown man pitched forward on his face and Ned leaped across his inert body and hurled his way through the tangle.

As he tore his way onward, he heard savage warlike cries behind him, joined by the deep thudding of drums. His slaying of one of their number had evidently stopped the others from following him until they took stock of the situation. But he knew that they would not be long in taking up the pursuit again. He had to get to the beach before they did!

Then a new complication arose. In his excitement and haste, he had missed the trail! He was lost! Yet with perspiration and breathing hard, he leaned against a tree and

feverishly reloaded his musket. All the while he gave anxious ear to the warlike alarms which now seemed not so much behind as all around him.

He cried out desperately, "Conseil! Hey, Frenchy! Where are you?"

He did not really expect an answer, but to his joy Conseil's voice called out from his left and not far distant. He had apparently traveled in a complete circle. Shouting an answer, he headed in the direction of Conseil's voice.

Unbelievably the solid green jungle walls seemed suddenly to thin. He saw the bright blue sky first and in another moment he burst into the open. The sand of the beach was beneath his feet and the ocean was before him. He saw his friend and the skiff and, far beyond them fast on the reef, the *Nautilus*.

Conseil was only a few hundred yards up the beach. He let out a joyous shout on seeing Ned and waved his arms. But almost simultaneously, two of the naked savages crashed out into the open farther down. They capered around, uttering howls of warning to their companions. Then they hurled their spears at Ned as he lifted his musket. Both missiles fell short, and the cannibals jumped nimbly back into the jungle unharmed by Ned's musket ball.

"Launch the boat," cried Ned as he raced toward Conseil, but the latter stood petrified until the harpooner reached him and started to push the skiff into the water himself. Then Conseil fell to and they were soon waist-deep in the water with their little craft headed seaward. Frantically,

they clambered aboard. The beach was now crowded with howling savages.

Some of the braver natives began to follow the skiff out into the water. Others stood on the beach and threw ineffective spears. A few of the natives had slingshots and peppered the dinghy with a shower of small stones.

"Rotten shots," commented Ned.

Although he did not fear the stone shower, there was great danger that those of the natives who were wading out to the boat might reach it. To discourage these, Ned quickly loaded the musket and shot into their midst. The warriors fled back to the beach in wild alarm.

"I guess that's showing them," said the harpooner with satisfaction as he headed the dinghy toward the *Nautilus*. He had not given many pulls on the oars when he cried out to Conseil, "Hey! Look at them, will you? They're lugging out their war canoes!"

Conseil, sitting in the stern, looked around apprehensively to see groups of natives emerging from the jungle carrying outrigger canoes. With incredible rapidity they launched them and took up the pursuit, obviously determined to intercept the dinghy before it could reach the *Nautilus*.

They had not counted on Ned Land's seamanship. He threw his magnificently muscled body into his task. His biceps bulged and the little craft leaped ahead, skimming the water like a sea bird. The emergency inspired him and added to his skill as he expertly breasted the breakers. Safely

through these hazardous waters the dinghy swirled into the eddies about the submarine.

Conseil had little hope that he would ever step on the deck of the *Nautilus*. It seemed completely impossible to him, but again Ned was equal to the task. Waiting for the right moment and gauging the distance accurately, he made the perilous leap to the deck of the submarine and then with a mighty heave hauled the dinghy to the deck with Conseil still glued to the rear seat.

Ned had won the race but in all probability there would now be a battle to face. For with a skill no less than Ned's, the natives easily negotiated the rough seas in their heavy canoes and now at least a dozen of them surrounded the *Nautilus*. Each of these catamarans contained about thirty armed warriors who brandished their spears and shouted war cries.

"Get below!" cried Ned to Conseil, who lost not a second in hurling himself down the hatchway. Ned reached into the dinghy for the musket, but it had fallen overboard and he found himself weaponless. The savages began to jump into the water and swim toward the *Nautilus*. A quick look toward the control room told Ned that there was no one there to take in the dangerous situation. With the nearest swimmers only a few feet from the submarine, Ned dashed to the forward hatch and clattered down the stairs to spread the alarm.

"Cannibals! Cannibals!" he bellowed. "They're coming aboard! Close the hatches! We're being boarded!"

As he rushed past the chart room, he saw Nemo bent over his desk. The captain turned his head to see what the commotion was about.

"Blast it! Don't sit there, do something!" Ned cried. "Close the hatches!"

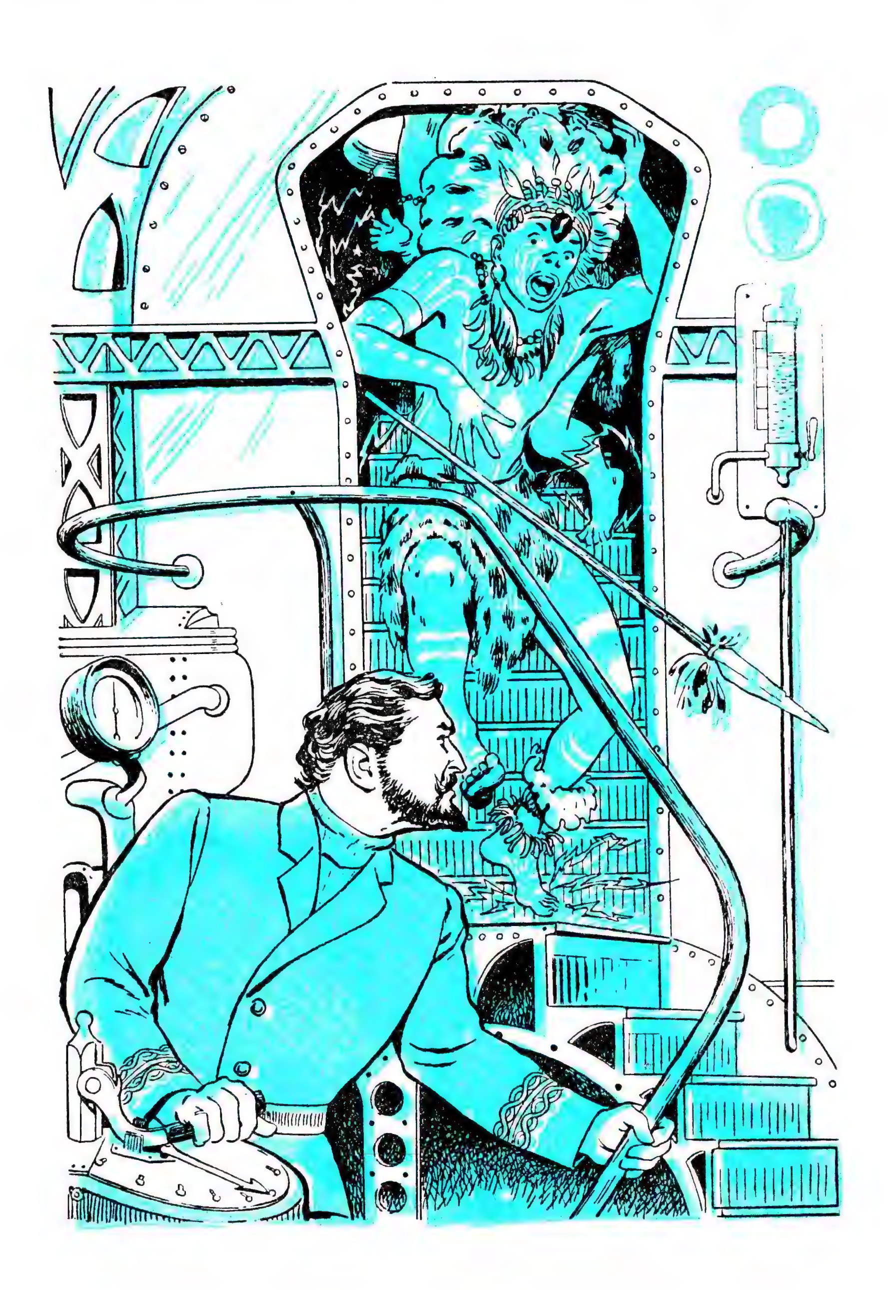
Nemo rose slowly and calmly. "So you've brought us a cargo of cannibals, eh? I might have expected it of you." There was heavy sarcasm in his voice but absolutely no concern.

Ned looked back up the stairs where dark shadows indicated that the natives were already swarming on deck. He grabbed up a flensing iron, crying, "Repel boarders!" and took up his position at the foot of the steps.

"Stand back from those stairs," commanded Nemo. "Stand back, I say."

Ned stepped away reluctantly. Then, as he watched, the captain slammed home a large switch. What followed was astounding! Some of the savages who had begun to crowd down the stairs gave bloodcurdling shrieks and instantly began to go into violent contortions. A trail of electric sparks went snapping up the railing and iron steps. The air was full of crackling and buzzing sounds.

Howling and panic-stricken, the natives fought their way out from the hatchway. Nemo pulled back the switch and went to the control room from which he could get an unimpeded view of the deck. By the time he got there, not a single savage was left on board. In a frenzy of fear at the white man's magic, they had dived overboard and



were swimming away as fast as they could, back to their waiting canoes.

In a few minutes they were on their way to the shore, where they did not even stop to pull up their canoes, but went dashing helter-skelter into the safety of the jungle.

The attack was over, but Ned Land's ordeal was not. In the passageway, he was accosted by Nemo who was wearing an expression of suppressed rage. Ned should have been warned by this look, but he was still too impressed by the captain's wonderful electric repellent to practice his usual caution in dealing with the officer.

"That's one way to keep folks from dropping in," he chuckled in admiration.

Nemo's answer was cold and brittle. "Merely a mild charge of electricity. Inhospitable but harmless." His eyes snapped. "And speaking of hospitality, Mr. Land, may I say that you have abused mine for the last time?"

"How's that?" demanded Ned, instantly antagonistic.

"You have continuously disobeyed orders," Nemo continued. Now his voice rose in fury. "I told you once the fate of my prisoners, and since you insist on being treated as one, I have no choice but to oblige you!" He called to his mate. "Take this man in charge."

The mate and two crewmen promptly seized the harpooner. With one swift powerful gesture, he threw them off and faced Nemo angrily.

"What's all this about?" he snarled and looked fearlessly into Nemo's eyes.

Nemo did not change his expression of cold fury. "You left the beach with the intention of escaping. I saw it all through my telescope. The only reason you returned is because the natives forced you to. You are going to regret that choice, Mr. Land."

He nodded to a crewman who had come up behind Ned. "Put him under guard below," he ordered.

Ned whirled around with every intention of fighting for his freedom, no matter what the odds, but when he found himself looking into the muzzle of the electric gun the crewman was holding, his spirit left him. He shrugged in surrender and allowed himself to be led off to the brig.



CHAPTER 17

Monster in a Trap

Captain Nemo still did not seem at all worried by the unfavorable situation of his ship. He was, in fact, completely confident that she would float off the reef at exactly the time he had specified.

Nor did the cannibals cause him any further concern. Oddly enough, it seemed to Aronnax, the captain even regretted he had had to use such drastic methods to drive them off.

"I would not injure them wilfully," he explained to the professor. "They are children of nature and do not have in them that cultivated viciousness we find in the so-called civilized races of mankind."

The professor was somewhat taken aback by this mild description of what seemed to him a particularly savage and bloodthirsty people.

"But they are cannibals! They eat human flesh," he protested. "How do you reconcile that—or condone it?"

"They practice cannibalism because of their inherited

religious beliefs and because of their particular primitive form of culture," the captain explained. Then he added, with a grim touch of humor, "In a way it's a sincere form of flattery to those who are sacrificed, since the cannibals believe that what courage their victims may possess is imbibed with their flesh." There was a weird smile on his face as he looked shoreward. "Just look at them now."

Aronnax directed his attention to the beach. He saw that now the natives were coming out of hiding and crowding onto the beach. Soon the strand opposite the *Nautilus* was milling with brown figures. He could see women and children among the men, and all, both male and female, appeared to have adorned themselves as if for some festive occasion.

"Are they going to attack us again?" asked the professor fearfully.

"No, I think not," answered Nemo after he had studied the shore through his spyglass. "I have an idea that they have come to placate us. They have probably decided that we are gods and that we and our vessel have come from another world. The effect on them is very much what it would be on us were we to encounter a space ship from another planet."

Nemo was right. The natives had decided it was useless to resist these terrifying creatures who killed with noise and smoke and whose frightful ship racked their bodies with the trembling fire that falls from the skies.

Taking the spyglass that the captain held out to him,

Aronnax continued to watch with great interest as the natives on shore performed their ritual dances, always facing toward the *Nautilus* and occasionally holding out offerings of what appeared to be roast meats and tropical fruits.

Captain Nemo meanwhile went into a consultation with his mate about refloating the *Nautilus*.

"The tide will be at its fullest in exactly two hours," said Nemo. "See if you can do anything further to lighten ship. In about an hour's time we can start trying to back her off."

The mate saluted and left, while Nemo went back to studying his charts.

After some length of time had passed, he asked absently, over his shoulder. "How are our devoted worshipers?"

"At the moment," answered Aronnax, still peering intently through the spyglass, "they are dancing around a tremendous fire—or what will be a fire, when the smoke clears."

"What?" cried Nemo. An unexpected sharpness was in his voice. In one quick movement he was at the professor's side.

His excited air surprised Aronnax. "You are troubled by something?"

"That smoke!" replied Nemo. "Look at it! That could be seen far over the horizon. It is a black signal that will surely attract any hostile ship that may see it. Do you realize how helpless we would be then? An enemy vessel could stand a mile off and destroy us at leisure while we are held defenseless on this reef."

This put a much different aspect on the native celebration. "What can we do to stop them?" the professor asked.

"Nothing at all," answered Nemo shortly. "But it is now absolutely essential that we speed up our departure."

He searched the distant horizon anxiously, looking for signs of the warship he knew was somewhere in the area but saw nothing. Then he quickly appraised the waters about his imprisoned ship, noting with some satisfaction that already the reef was covered quite deeply and the water no longer swirled about or broke so violently over the rocks.

"There is already a better feel to the ship. She is no longer so solidly wedged in. It might do no harm to make a few preliminary trials."

He called crisply into the speaking tube. "Half power astern. Increase gradually."

Aronnax felt the vibration as the ship's power was started. Gradually it was intensified and then there came a few hardly noticeable jerks, accompanied by sharp scraping sounds on the hull. Nemo gave an anxious ear to these and shook his head.

"Power off!" he ordered sharply into the tube and the vibration ceased instantly.

"Not quite ready. All a matter of time." Nemo turned to the professor. "But didn't I tell you we'd get her off today? Well, we will. You'll see!"

But Nemo's lightheartedness was short-lived. At that very moment a crewman stepped up, saluted, and reported tersely, "Smoke beyond the headland, sir."

Both the professor and the captain stepped quickly to the rear port and from there they could see a column of smoke rising beyond the headland and moving toward the point. It could only be coming from a ship's funnel, and the very blackness of it indicated the vessel must be proceeding under forced draft.

Nemo gritted his teeth. "We're caught here like a lame duck on a pond, curse the luck. We've got to get off even if it tears out our bottom. I wouldn't give them the satisfaction of finishing me off this easily."

He went into action at the speaking tube. "Emergency!" he snapped. "Full speed astern!"

A tremendous vibration racked the *Nautilus*. Nemo froze grimly to the controls as though trying to disregard the frightful damage that his ship's hull was undergoing. A series of sharp jerks ended with a grinding, tearing sound which had Nemo literally screaming into the intercom: "Power off! Power off! Report on damage!"

At the rear port, Aronnax watched anxiously for the first sight of the approaching ship. As it rounded the headland, he saw to his dismay that it was indeed a warship—a formidable-looking frigate standing about four miles off, well out to sea to avoid the reefs.

"There's the ship," he cried. "It's a man-of-war and . . ." he hesitated to pronounce the dread words, "it is flying no flag."

"Damage control reporting, sir," droned the loudspeaker of the intercom system. "No visible damage, sir."

But Nemo was standing beside Aronnax at the rear port. He breathed heavily as he stared with hatred at the enemy who now had him at such a terrible disadvantage.

"You swine," he muttered and struck his fist repeatedly on the metal sill. "You won't catch me this way. No! Not by the thirteen sacred hinges of the gates of Singapore!"

He rushed back to the speaking tube and yelled, "Full power astern. Give me all the reserve you have! Man the watertight bulkheads for an emergency dive!"

With a renewed rush of vibrations, the ship seemed to go into convulsions, giving desperate jolts, scraping and tearing in a fearful fashion. She was like a living thing battling to escape her destroyer.

Meanwhile, the man-of-war—which had come to investigate the natives' festive fire—seemed of a sudden to discover the *Nautilus*. The instant of recognition was marked by a tremendous billow of fresh smoke which belched from her funnels as she veered sharply away, almost as if by protective instinct. Then she sped out to sea at a tangent. This was to provide herself with sea room and time to organize a defense against a deadly enemy, for obviously those on board her had not yet realized the helpless situation of the *Nautilus*.

Aronnax misread this maneuver completely. "The good Lord be thanked," he breathed gratefully. "She is running away!"

"No, sir," replied the mate who was standing at his side and watching the enemy carefully. "She's just playing it

safe. You see, she has no way of knowing we are stuck on the reef. When she discovers she has caught the 'monster' in a trap and helpless . . . " he shrugged, "why then we'll feel her fire soon enough."

All this time, the struggle of the *Nautilus* to escape from the reef went on unabated. Captain Nemo had stopped his ears to the awful sounds that came from under the hull. His teeth were clenched tightly. His eyes were blank. In the stern, the huge screw, revolving at terrific force, churned the water into foam. Inch by painful inch, the trapped vessel made backward progress. But at what a cost to her keel no one dared to guess!

The warship had stopped her seaward surge and had now come about broadside to take stock of the situation. Soon a white puff of smoke rose from one of her large-caliber pivot guns. A huge geyser of water midway between the two ships showed where the shot had gone. It was definitely short.

Nemo, still standing in a trance-like state, appeared not to notice.

"We're being shelled, sir," the mate reported to him. "But she's out of range, I think."

"She'll wait to see if her attack has alerted us," answered Nemo in a voice that shook with the terrible vibration of the ship.

Now he sprang to action. Going to the tube, he bellowed, "Hold her steady! You're slacking! In heaven's name, give me more power!" He rattled the controls furiously as



though that would somehow give the ship renewed impetus.

The backward jolts increased in intensity. Now there was a feeling of steady progression. Nemo let out a loud cry of triumph. Suddenly the jerks ceased and nothing could be felt but the fierce vibration of the ship.

The mate at the port gave a sharp warning shout: "Here they come, sir!"

Evidently those in command of the man-of-war had discovered the plight of the *Nautilus* and made their decision. The warship was under way, picking up speed on a course that would place her abeam of the submarine and at a very close range. This would bring her broadsides into deadly play. Moreover, as she came on, her heavier guns would be increasingly effective. A single direct hit from one of these Long Toms would be a serious matter.

Now Captain Nemo again demanded the utmost of his ship, calling his orders furiously. The *Nautilus* shook and strained. It was apparent to all that if they did not get off the reef soon, something must surely give.

"He's tearing her to pieces," groaned the mate. "This is madness." He looked around at his captain, to see Nemo frozen to the controls with the look of a wild man.

Actually, Nemo was doing the only thing possible under the circumstances. He was staking all on a quick break-out. Anything else would mean certain death to all. Even Aronnax understood this and, as he prayed silently, he felt again a horrible grinding and jarring that progressed from the stern to the bow of the ship. And then, wonder of wonders,

there was suddenly the unmistakable cushiony feel of deep water under the keel. The *Nautilus* was free! Cries of joy were heard all over the ship as the crew realized what had happened.

Cautiously now, despite the fact that the enemy was bearing down on him rapidly, the captain backed his ship away from the reefs. Aronnax shivered with apprehension when he saw the narrowing distance between the two ships. He knew that once out in the open sea, the submarine's great speed would make it impossible for the warship to score a hit with shellfire. But would the *Nautilus* make it in time?

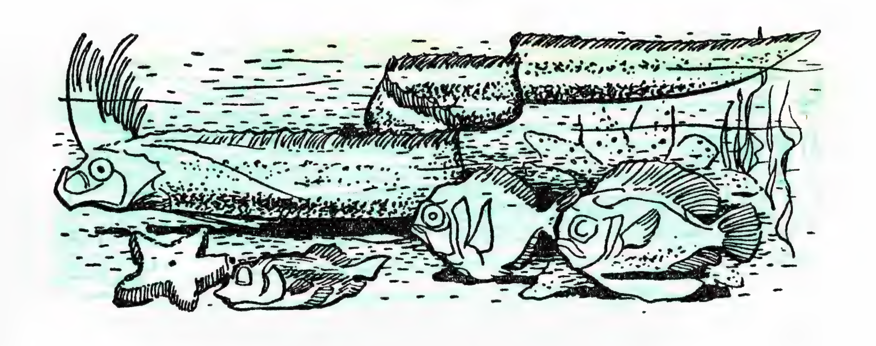
Those on the frigate were quick to realize the changed situation. They no longer had things all on their side. The monster, free, was once more the invincible destroyer of ships. Unless, of course, they could prevent her from getting into striking position. Still the warship continued to come on. Her commander was either a reckless fool or he was willing to gamble on the chance that he could once and for all time destroy this bitter enemy.

As the deadly, saw-toothed prow of the *Nautilus* came around to point seaward and her propeller bit viciously into open water, a heavy salvo was released from the warship's port guns. Solid shot and shell lathered the water all around the submarine and she was enveloped in smoke and foam. Then, as she veered away from her enemy, unharmed by this broadside, and leaped forward into the waves, the warship's heavy cannon spoke.

Within the submarine, the jar and concussion from the first broadside had been severe, yet in the control room there was no panic or alarm. Nemo stood firm and calm now, holding his vessel steadily on her course and maneuvering her into an offensive position. He gave no order to submerge.

It was Aronnax's first experience under fire inside of the *Nautilus*. It struck him that Nemo's handling of his ship bordered on the reckless. Surely they were in great danger. Why didn't the captain submerge? Just one heavy shot in the right place . . . he saw the warship's Long Tom go off.

Crash! The professor knew by the sound and feel of it that the worst he feared had happened. A direct hit! The *Nautilus* literally staggered and heeled far over with sickening suddenness.



CHAPTER 18

The First to See

Alarm bells sounded and excited shouts came from below. The *Nautilus* had been hit below the waterline.

Nemo blared into the speaking tube, "Man the watertight door! Maintain speed! Emergency drill! Nordberg take charge of the pumps!"

He snapped at the mate, "Investigate the damage!"

His order was punctuated by another jar to the ship. But this shot was a near miss. The killers were overanxious.

On the second deck of the stricken submarine, crewmen were feverishly dogging down the clamps around the edge of the watertight door they had hurled shut against the flooding waters. Gradually the *Nautilus* was submerging.

As the floor tilted beneath him and the water outside the port rose and covered it, Aronnax bethought himself of Ned Land. Locked in a tiny room in the rear of the ship, was he to be left to die like a rat in a trap? Without a word, he left the control room bracing himself against the walls as he went. Nemo paid no attention to his going.

In the salon, Aronnax found Conseil, white-faced and terrified.

"We are sinking!" cried Conseil, as he rushed toward him with outstretched hands. "The end has come!"

A number of crewmen brushed past them and went out the forward end of the salon.

"We must face it; the situation is grave," answered the professor. "I am on my way to see if I can release Ned Land. He must be given an equal chance with all of us to save his life."

"But—where is he? How can we find him?" Conseil stammered.

"The brig is a small compartment far in the rear, on the second deck. Come—" Aronnax was interrupted by a metallic clang close by.

Both men turned to see that another watertight door had been slammed shut at the forward end of the salon. The crewmen who had just rushed through were screwing it tight from the other side. Almost instantly there came a similar sound from the rear of the room. They were sealed in!

"Now it is we who are trapped like rats," wailed Conseil. He ran to the forward door and beat upon it with his pudgy fists, screaming, "Let me out, you fiends! assassins! murderers!"

A dull boom sounded from somewhere in the ship. The deck of the salon teetered more sharply. The lights dimmed, then winked off. The only illumination left was the eerie

blue glow of the emergency lamps along the floor.

Conseil hunched over and buried his face in his hands in terror. But Aronnax's alert eyes were fixed on the faintly glowing overhead dials which indicated the depth to which the *Nautilus* was now rapidly sinking. As the needle passed the forty-foot mark, a bell rang. Aronnax continued to watch in fascination that was not untinged with dread. He looked to the doors to see if any water was coming into the salon. With relief, he saw none.

Surely the bottom would be reached soon, he reasoned. How deep could it be off the shore of an island? But the needle moved on steadily. At one hundred feet the bell sounded again. And again at two hundred. Still they sank. And still sounds of frantic activity reached them through the steel that walled them in as in a metal tomb.

In the power room, where the flooding was most dangerous, the crew detail fighting it had erected a scaffold of steel braces against a leaking door. This bulkhead was the critical spot. Behind it was the open gash caused by the shell through which the seas had poured. The forward section was engulfed. Therefore, above all else, that bulkhead and door must be made to hold.

But the pressure behind was terrific. Streams of water were forcing their way through the edges and the floor was already well flooded. Pumps going at full blast sucked the water out as quickly as possible.

With a loud twang a stanchion broke loose from the door and whipped across the room, narrowly missing several

crewmen. A new stream of water spurted from the bulging door.

Behind the bulkhead from the flooded forward section came the cracking sound of tortured steel. The extreme pressure was doing sinister things not only forward but beneath the deck of the power room as well. The floor plates were beginning to buckle and the water was now inching up the power plant itself.

From under the floor came a sudden formidable wrench, causing the deck to heave convulsively. There followed a series of terrifying metallic thumps, each of which rocked the compartment. It seemed as though the driving shaft must be knocking the bottom out of the ship. Then with a scream of steel upon steel all mechanical movement in the ship stopped. The pumps clanked to a standstill. The fans ceased humming. The power was off.

In the dim emergency light, the men looked at each other dumbly.

Now the water commenced to rise in earnest. There was a crackle of electricity and a cloud of acrid smoke filled the compartment. The men coughed as the smoke bit into their lungs. They looked to their officer for orders. Were they to stay and be asphyxiated? What was to be done now?

The sudden appearance of Captain Nemo in the doorway ended all indecision.

"How much water back there?" he snapped, indicating the bulkhead.

"Flooded, sir," answered the officer. "We've got about

two feet of water in here and rising."

Nemo coughed. "We can't stand these fumes for long. I must have power."

"I believe the shaft's jammed solid, sir, and our power unit is flooded. I don't think—"

Nemo cut him off harshly. "The power unit *can't* be flooded. If the shaft is frozen we'll put in our emergency one."

He strode over to the starboard wall where the spare shaft was secured. "Leverage," he commanded. "Unlimber the hoist."

His coolness and decision steadied the crewmen. They fell to, slipping and sliding in the rising water. Some of them pulled an overhead chain hoist in position above the spare shaft. Others pried at the floor plates. It was a race with pressure outside and the rising water within. It was also a matter of human endurance as the smoke grew ever thicker and the men coughed continually.

In the salon, Conseil had joined Aronnax and both men were leaning on the railing of the viewing well. Handkerchiefs were clasped to their mouths, for the room was swirling with smoke. Their eyes were glued to the dimly illuminated battery of dials that hung from the ceiling beam above them.

Conseil gasped through a fit of coughing, "Look! The dials! They are no longer moving."

"We have gone too deep. The pressure is too great. The

instruments can no longer register it." He looked sharply around as a cracking sound came from the closed viewports. "I wonder the ship can stand it!" he marveled.

Conseil slowly sank to his knees as he was overtaken by another attack of coughing. "Professor," he gasped, "I can't breathe. . . . I shall die. . . ."

"Non, non, mon ami," replied Aronnax sternly. "I cannot—I will not—believe that our last moment has come. Try to control yourself. Come, dear friend, this wonderful craft has survived much worse situations than this one." But his brave words ended in a violent fit of coughing of his own.

Concern for his old friend caused Conseil to forget himself, if only for a moment. Gently he led the professor to the settee and sat down beside him, looking anxiously into his face.

"We will save our breath," said Conseil. "And to make the time pass, let us think only of the pleasant things that have happened to us in our lives."

Aronnax patted his friend's hand weakly, and nodded his head in agreement.

And so they sat, side by side, each with his own private thoughts. Perhaps they were slightly stupefied by the fumes. They lost all sense of time and no longer heard the sounds of activity or of disaster that rang persistently through the ship. They seemed quietly resigned to dying.

As they sat there, unmoving and almost at peace, the fans began to whir and the lights flickered and suddenly



burst into bright illumination. The two men roused themselves slowly and looked at each other. They had been granted a reprieve! Silently they shook hands and smiled.

"There is no limit to the resourcefulness and ingenuity of that man," said Aronnax. "What a pity he is such a misanthrope!"

"Yes, you are right, Professor," replied Conseil. "But I have been thinking about Ned Land. He is just as hard and ruthless as the captain—in his own way—and I cannot help wondering what his feelings must be, shut up in a tiny steel chamber and left to smother or drown, without pity. I am thinking that if he survives this ordeal, he will be a man to reckon with. He will be as savage and vindictive as Nemo himself!"

"We must do everything we can to have him released," said Aronnax anxiously but without much conviction.

As they discussed the situation, the air in the chamber gradually cleared. A scarcely perceptible vibration soon indicated that the *Nautilus* was again getting power—more, she was actually making seaway! She had miraculously survived her fantastically deep submersion!

The conversation of the two Frenchmen was interrupted by sounds at the forward entrance of the salon. The iron door swung back into its recess and Captain Nemo stepped down into the room. He looked haggard and unkempt but there was no mistaking the look of triumph and self-satisfaction in his eyes.

He sniffed the air. "The fumes are almost cleared out,"

he said to the mate who had come in behind him. "And you will notice, André, that there is no evidence of buckling or leakage here at all. Ah! We have built well! Better than we thought, even."

He noticed the presence of the Frenchmen. "I trust you are all right?" he queried politely, addressing himself to Aronnax as usual.

In answer to the professor's nod, he added, "And so is our *Nautilus,* you will no doubt be glad to hear. We have replaced a broken drive shaft and patched our damaged hull. Most of the water has already been pumped out of the flooded compartments and we are again under way, not too much the worse for wear."

"We are very far down in the ocean's depths, are we not, Captain?" asked Aronnax.

Nemo glanced at the overhead dials. "There are limits beyond which man and his puny efforts cannot survive. But we—" he paused for emphasis, "we have exceeded this point by many thousands of feet. Think of it! Think of it!" He spread his arms dramatically. "We held!" There was strong emotion in his vibrant voice as he repeated, "Yes—we held!"

He shook himself and, stepping down into the viewing well, he flung himself onto the settee.

"Deeper than man has ever gone before," he muttered to himself. "This is a new experience even for me. I confess I am tempted to open our steel shutters and look out into those inky depths around us."

"The pressure, Captain," warned the mate. "With only glass between . . . ?"

Nemo was not listening. "What wonders might we not see!" Turning to address the professor, he continued, "Are you as a scientist not afire with excitement at the prospect?"

"Yes, yes, of course," answered Aronnax, somewhat lamely, "but—"

"To be the first to see! to know!" Nemo went on with rising excitement.

"But there might be nothing at all to see out there," said the professor.

"Then we'll be the only ones in the world to know for certain! We may not have such an opportunity again," said Nemo as he got to his feet.

His eyes glowing feverishly, he strode to the controls while the other occupants of the room looked at each other with unconcealed alarm. Yet not one of them had any thought of stopping this complete autocrat. They did not dare even though they were convinced that their lives were being risked for a mere whim.

They hardly drew breaths as the smoothly functioning mechanism opened a pinpoint, in the center of the window, then slowly circled out upon a vista which opened their eyes wide in astonishment and drove all thoughts of personal danger from their minds.

Instead of darkness, black as the pit, they saw an eerie burst of light—a glow, phosphorescent and weird, made by living things that darted about in the velvety gloom. There

were thousands of these creatures—thousands! Each species, and there were many different kinds, had its own peculiar coloring and pattern of illumination—red, white, green, and all the various shades of the primary colors. But it was their frightfully fantastic shapes that riveted the attention. What was nature thinking of in fashioning these incredibly tortured forms?

"What are they?" came the involuntary query from the goggling Conseil.

"I don't know," answered Aronnax slowly. "Most of them defy classification. They are creatures of darkness in a world of eternal night. It is astounding!"

"The very pressures that would destroy us nourish these obscene monsters," said Nemo.

A fiendish-looking creation, aglow from nose to tail, swam languidly past the viewport, its warped body aglow with vari-colored spangles of dim lights. Another freakish creature that actually bore what looked like a tiny lantern on an appendage growing from its ugly snout swam into view, ignoring them completely. It, too, was festooned with pinpoints of brilliance in a checkerboard pattern. Then, like a shower of falling stars, a dazzling school of small fishes streaked across their vision.

"It is beautiful," breathed Aronnax in awe. "One could stay here forever. . . ."

"But our *Nautilus* cannot," put in the captain. "We must resurface to change our air. We cannot forget that we are but trespassers in this domain of monstrosities."

His mind was once again occupied with practical matters. He touched the glass window with something akin to reverence.

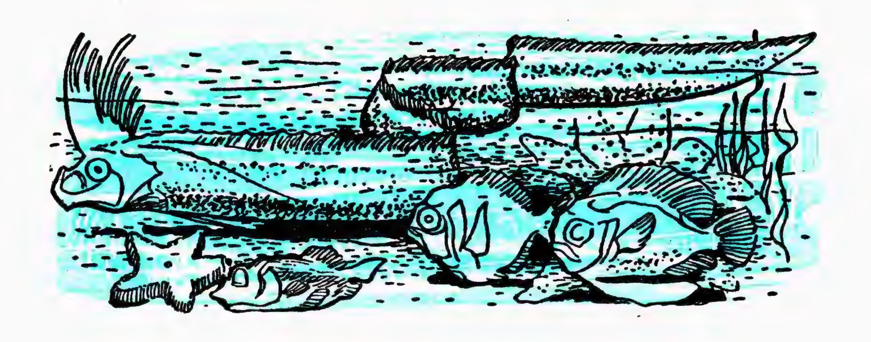
"It has the hardness of diamonds. Truly a marvelous discovery. They pilloried poor Auerbach because he would not give them the formula for this indestructible glass. But he gave the secret to me and if I so choose, the formula will die with me."

Aronnax ventured a protest. "I hope not, Captain Nemo. I sincerely hope not."

But the captain had already turned away toward the mate. "We will resurface," he ordered. "Check the pressure regulators in all rooms and compartments as we rise. When our air is replenished on the surface we will proceed as per schedule to Vulcania."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the mate and hesitated. "What if the warship is still up there, waiting for us?"

"Then we will sink it," replied Nemo coldly.



CHAPTER 19

The Giant Squids

The *Nautilus* lay placidly upon the surface of the ocean. Her breathing fins were open and her air-replenishing operation was proceeding smoothly.

The warship had vanished. Evidently its exulting commander had taken himself off to report his fancied destruction of the monster. Not even a smudge of smoke remained to show that she had ever been in the area.

The sky was aflame with the lush colors of a tropical sunset. Low on the western horizon, the cannibal island lay in a purple haze. In this setting of serene beauty there was nothing at all that even remotely suggested the terrible ordeal that was to be visited upon the captain and the crew of the *Nautilus*. For with the fading of the last hues of the magnificent sunset, dark death was to come to them and claim one of their number.

Captain Nemo and his mate were in the control room. After the excitement of the day, both men were silent and uncommunicative, attending strictly to business.

Back in his cabin, Aronnax was lying in his bunk trying to relax. Now that the terror was behind him, he was experiencing a nervous reaction that left him exhausted. Conseil had remained with him, for their common ordeal had served to draw the two compatriots together once again. They were in earnest conversation.

"There is no denying that this is a wonderful vessel," Conseil was saying, "but I must confess that I am no longer as impressed as I was when I first boarded her."

"Familiarity breeds contempt, my friend," Aronnax said, wisely. "It is a perfectly human trait. One takes the everyday miracle for granted, in time. For instance, steam engines, the telegraph, anesthesia, gas—all miracles and yet one finally feels as though one were born to them. I dare say all this," his hand swept out to indicate the ship around them, "will be the commonplace of the future."

"Unless these secrets are lost," Conseil put in.

"Never fear," answered the professor. "They will be rediscovered by future generations. What one man's mind has unearthed of nature's secrets, another can also learn. Of that I am sure. So sure, in fact, that I am no longer so immediately concerned about them." He spoke with a feeling of great relief in his voice.

The relief was echoed in Conseil's sigh. "That is good," he murmured. Then he went on, "I do not believe that man is meant to know many of the things he so desperately strives for. I cannot hold, for instance, with those who yearn to soar in the heavens like a bird. It is unnatural. It will

never come to be. Of that I am sure."

"Well, you must admit that balloons have done very well," said the professor.

"Yes," replied Conseil with a frown, "and already they have been adapted to war. The Union armies during the American war between the States attempted to put them to offensive use."

Aronnax smiled. "You see?" he said. "That is precisely Captain Nemo's contention. Man seems always to divert the fruits of his genius to the horrid business of war and destruction. Perhaps Nemo is right in not wishing to trust his fellow human beings with his precious secrets. Perhaps one ought not to meddle in this affair."

Conseil was silent for a while, his eyes heavy-lidded with thought. "I take it you no longer care to learn Nemo's secret of limitless power?" he asked.

"Let us put it this way," said Aronnax. "It is no longer a matter of urgency to me. I shall leave it to a higher authority. If it be God's will that I be a modern Prometheus and bring to the earth this new and more terrible fire, then well and good. If it be not His will. . . ." He shrugged.

A wonderfully happy sigh came from the little Frenchman. His face shone with his rare Buddha-like smile.

"I am very pleased that you have reached this conclusion, dear Professor," he said gently. "It is as though I had found my good friend again. I am very happy."

Meanwhile, in the control room, Nemo's pent-up emotions were beginning to come to the fore. As long as there

was still light in the sky, he kept a ceaseless vigil hoping desperately to see some sign of the warship that had so nearly destroyed him. But as the sun sank lower, he burned with scarcely suppressed fury. To wreak revenge upon his enemy was now his consuming desire. He muttered through clenched teeth, his very beard bristling with rage.

"There is no justice," he broke out bitterly. "They deserve death—nothing less! Why must a perverse Fate deny me vengeance? Why does she give aid to the vicious and unworthy?"

André tried to console him. "Perhaps Fate is on our side, sir," he ventured to suggest. "In our hastily patched-up condition it may be just as well that we don't meet with the warship. A sudden shock such as we would sustain in ramming them . . . might it not endanger our weakened hull?"

"Nevertheless, I would chance it," growled the captain. "I know what the *Nautilus* can do. She is built soundly. You know that." He smote the iron side next to him with his fist. There was confidence as well as something close to affection in the gesture.

The mate did not answer. Secretly he thought the so-called invincible *Nautilus* had shown herself to be disturbingly vulnerable. Only Nemo's fanatical devotion and skill had been able to save her this time. It was perfectly obvious to the mate that the captain made up for any deficiency in his vessel. André did not dare to think of what might happen without his leader's strength and his amaz-

ing resourcefulness to save them.

"Look there!" Nemo's startled voice broke through the mate's gloomy thoughts. "Astern there! A giant squid!"

The sight that met the mate's eyes made him recoil in utter astonishment and horror. Never had he seen a creature so hideous. Its monstrous size was beyond anything he could have imagined.

"It is heading straight for us!" Nemo exclaimed.

"There's another one, farther off! It looks even larger!"

"They mean to attack. No doubt of it!" Captain Nemo sprang to the speaking tube. "Close all breathing fins. Secure for action. Ready ship for emergency dive."

Instant activity leaped through the submarine at his terse commands. He handed the controls over to a crewman and took his station at the rear port. From below the control room, inside the submarine, came the report, "All secure."

Outside in the fire-tinged sea behind the *Nautilus,* horridly illuminated by the setting sun, the enormous tentacles of the foremost squid snaked out of the water, feeling toward what it undoubtedly took for its mortal enemy, a sperm whale.

Without turning from the window Nemo bit out an order to the steersman, "Full power ahead!"

The wake of the *Nautilus* creamed pink as the propeller thrust the ship away from its would-be assailant. But the tentacled monster was determined. Even as it dropped back from the submarine's receding stern it gathered for a closing

lunge. With a prodigious leap, it squirted its bulk forward, hurling itself upon its prey. Writhing arms thick as trees encircled the stern of the *Nautilus* in a grip of iron. And although the propeller frothed furiously the drag of the huge creature's body brought the vessel to a gradual stop.

Then the full weight of the monstrous thing was brought to bear, forcing the submarine's stern downward and tilting her nose up out of the water. The massive tentacles wound themselves about the whirling propeller blades, forcing them to slow down and then to stop altogether—smothering their movement in thick squirming tissue. Blood and an inky fluid dyed the water, but still the loathsome beast held on stubbornly, tightening its hold ever more firmly—vainly trying to crush this strangest of whales.

"We're fouled!" Nemo ground his teeth in anger as he tilted his body against the sternward slope of the deck.

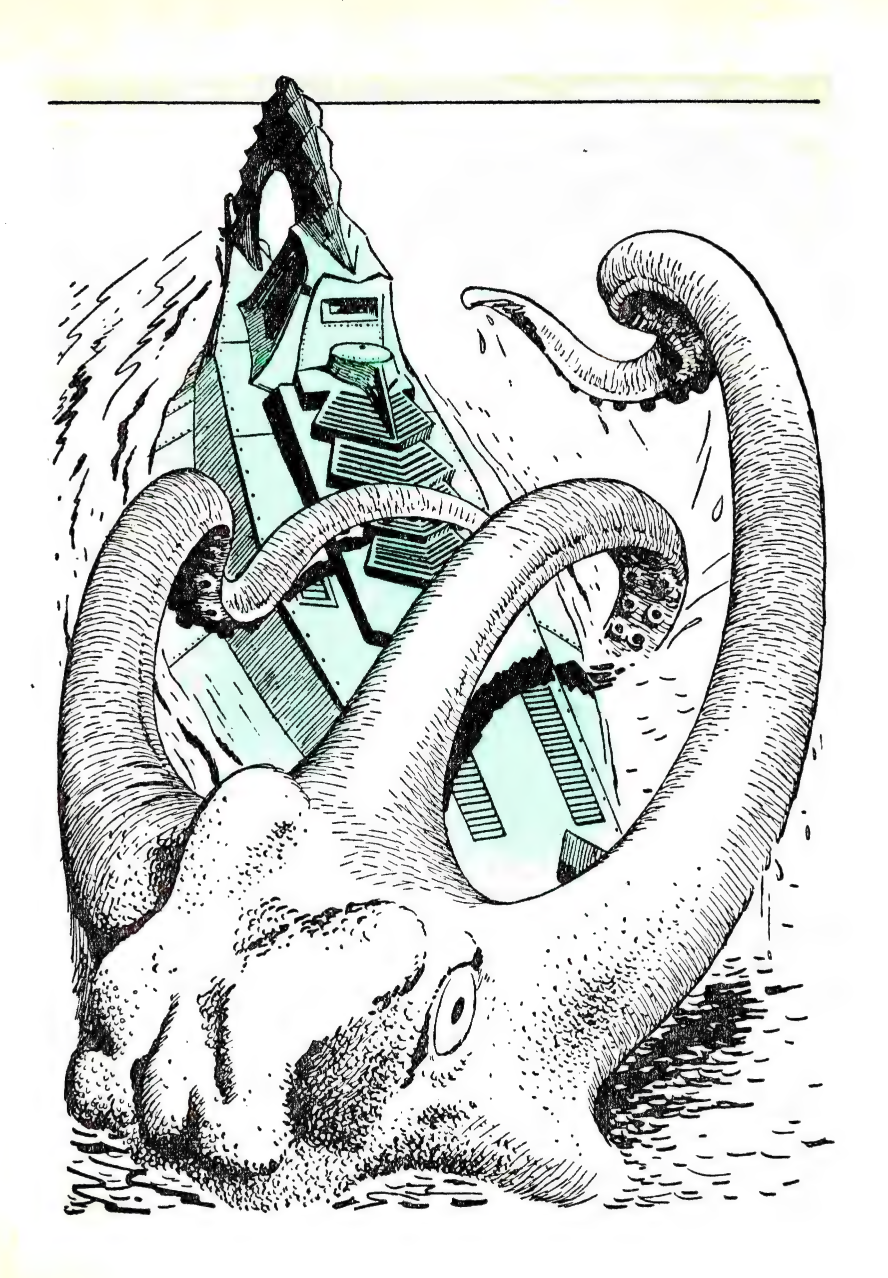
"Shall we proceed to submerge, sir?" queried the mate anxiously.

"No!" Nemo bit out the word. "We'd be at a worse disadvantage below. We'll electrocute it. Give it the full repellent charge. Rheostat up, point, forty thousand."

The mate departed with a hurried, "Aye, sir," and clattered down the steps to the chart room where he could be heard in turn giving orders.

As Nemo waited in the control room, the tilt of the deck became worse. He glared savagely at his repulsive enemy. He was afire with impatience.

"Now! Now!" he growled fiercely. "What's delaying



him? The cursed thing will stand us on end!"

Then he gave a triumphant cry as the awaited electrical charge suddenly cracked in a glowing pattern about the hull of the *Nautilus*. Jagged lightning sprang along the ship and encircled the body of the giant sea beast. As it became enveloped in a livid shower of sparks, it writhed convulsively and then was still, as sudden death loosed its scorched tentacles.

But now, without warning, a violent explosion from the stern laced the waters with streamers of fire. The submarine trembled from end to end, shaking off the stiffened squid which sank away into the darkening depths. Cries from below tore Nemo's attention away from his post at the window. He looked up the sloping deck to the stair well from which billowed a cloud of yellow acrid smoke.

At this instant, her propeller now freed, the *Nautilus* came to an even keel and proceeded under way once more. Momentarily reassured, Nemo could now see the surface of the ocean, over which darkness was beginning to fall.

One glance was enough to tell him that he now had the second and larger of the squids to deal with.

"Prepare second charge," he ordered quickly. "Another squid coming in fast. We'll give it the same reception." To the steersman, he directed, "Power off! We can't take any more chances with the propeller blades."

The mate's blackened face appeared at the opening of the stair well. "Sorry, sir. All elements are burned out! It will take some repairing. . . ."

Nemo turned away from him impatiently and glared out of the rear port. The new attacker was already upon them, its bulky arms squirming over the deck and tail installations, its ugly bloated body afloat alongside like a huge balloon.

"Filthy beast," snarled Nemo. "You shall have a taste of my electric gun."

His commands followed rapidly. "André! Charge the electric gun! Helmsman! Hold her steady! Ready the forward hatch! Stand by, crew, for deck emergency!"

The mate's disturbed voice cut in, "Sorry, sir. I can't ready the gun. The charging circuit elements have burned out, too."

If this was discouraging news to the captain, he showed no signs of it. His lust for battle was in no way abated.

"Then we'll fight with axes and harpoons," he shouted. "And hear this, crew," he cried to the men as they swarmed up the stairs to the hatchway, "we'll be fighting at close quarters with the most tenacious of all sea beasts. Stay clear of the tentacles. Remember that the only vital spot is between the eyes."

So saying, he sprang up the steps ahead of his men, as the main hatch clanged open. It was barely open when the writhing end of one of the squid's tentacles came flailing down the steps upon Nemo. He struck at it with his axe. The blade bit deep, but in the next moment the weapon was swept from his hands and the irresistible tentacle swept him back down the stairs. Spurting blood, the

slippery appendage snaked after him, seeking him out, feeling for a stranglehold.

Nemo gathered himself up. "Quick!" he cried. "To the forward hatch." He herded his men toward the passageway. Behind him the long dark serpent-thing probed around the stairway.

Aronnax and Conseil, coming out of the salon, saw it there and dashed back to where they had come from. Stark horror was in their faces.

As the forward hatch sprang open, Nemo leaped fearlessly up to the deck, his men crowding out after him. The turgid body of the beast was now fastened amidships, its restless tentacles sliding over and around the hull of the submarine. The weight of the monster was canting the ship to portside where the deck was awash.

Nemo took in the situation at a glance. Slipping on the tilted deck, he rushed to the attack with his crew at his heels. At the end of the wheelhouse, he stopped and snatched a harpoon from one of the men.

"Stand clear," he yelled.

With his weapon poised, he crept around the starboard side of the wheelhouse. As the flattened end of one of the squid's tentacles swept over his head, he let fly. Missing the vital spot, the harpoon buried itself deeply in the fleshy tissue behind the monster's eye.

Maddened by the thrust, the swollen mass of the creature seemed to contract. Blood spurted from the wound. Then it raised itself from the water, expanding even more than

it had been before. It whirled a number of its loosened arms like monstrous flails, sweeping the deck and brushing a number of crewmen into the water. One of the furiously gyrating appendages plummeted down upon Captain Nemo. In an instant he was a helpless prisoner, pinned against the dorsal fin, with the tentacle wound tightly about the lower part of his body.

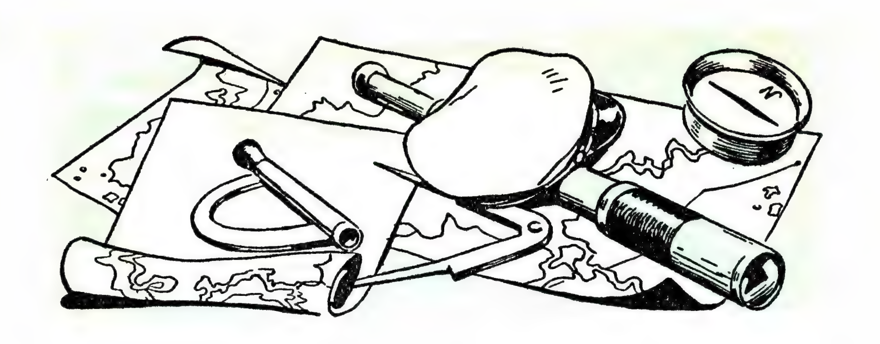
"Spread out," he bellowed fearlessly. "Use your weapons! Harpoon it! Kill it!"

The men, infuriated by the desperate plight of their leader, plunged into the midst of the writhing mass of tissue, stabbing, hacking, soundlessly going about their bloody work with fierce determination. Foremost was André, the mate. The deck was now slippery with the monster's gore but the mate fought his way through the dreadful tangle of hacked and bleeding tentacles. Beside Nemo at last, he chopped away at the imprisoning arm of the squid, cutting into it with deep strokes until he had finally severed it completely. Then, like a falling tree, another descending tentacle swept him from the deck and into the darkening water.

Fighting loose from the loathsome coils of the dead flesh that still imprisoned him, Nemo dashed to the rescue of his mate. Others sprang to lend a hand. They dragged the dazed man aboard in the nick of time for one of the tentacles in the water was already reaching for his body.

It was at this moment that the groping appendage which had thrust itself down the main hatch tore itself out from

the depths of the *Nautilus* and descended upon Nemo and the group around André. As if singling out the captain, it hurled its heavy folds about him, sweeping him off his feet and along the deck in one awful, savage thrust. Transfixed with horror, the crewmen saw their captain carried up and whirled aloft, his body silhouetted darkly against the graying sky.



CHAPTER 20

Ned Saves a Life

Below deck, Ned Land lurched determinedly along the passageway leading to the forward stairway. Behind him was Aronnax, white-faced and horror-stricken. The professor still held in his hand the key to the brig from which he had just released the harpooner.

"Never you fear, matey! Ned Land won't let you down! He's the buck-o that can handle the orneriest sea beast that ever lived."

The burly harpooner started up the stairs. In one hand he clutched a cleaver which he had snatched from the galley as they went by.

One of the crewmen tumbled back down the stairs. His face bore the marks of the sea giant's attack and he was plainly out of the fight. Ned pushed him aside and at the same time snatched the man's harpoon from his hand. Then he vaulted up the stairs and onto the deck.

Aronnax stood dumbly and watched him go. Then he turned and went on trembling legs into the wheelhouse.

As Ned emerged, the deck was still crawling with the ugly, dark folds of the squid's tentacles. The huge bloated mass of the creature's body was rearing out of the water, its vicious beak snapping. High in the air, he could make out the form of a man in the beast's fatal grasp. In the now dim light, he could not tell which of the crew it was.

Nor did it matter to Ned who the victim was. All that counted was the coming fight with his traditional enemy—a monster of the deep that must be destroyed. He looked for a place of vantage.

With practiced arm and deadly accuracy, he hurled his harpoon at the target. Slicing in squarely between the eyes of the monster, the barbed missile buried itself up to the wooden shaft. Even in the uncertain light it was apparent that the wound was mortal. The fat bulbous body of the squid shrank slowly, sinking back into the sea, a quivering dark mass. Its mangled tentacles everywhere relaxed their hold, all but the one which held Captain Nemo aloft. This arm continued to wave slowly in the air, holding the captive even tighter in an embrace of death.

The crewmen on deck shouted in alarm but it was Ned Land who sprang to action. Whipping his knife out of its sheath, he leaped into the ocean after the slowly sinking squid. He swam strongly to the spot where the last protruding arm was now dragging its victim under. Maneuvering close to the powerful arm of the beast, he pried the clinging flesh away from the captain with his steel-fingered hands. Desperately, for now they were underwater and being



dragged deeper and deeper, he dug his knife home. He slashed and ripped with all his force as he felt the breath in his lungs fighting for release.

The water clouded suddenly with a jet black ooze and he felt the arm of the dying squid loosen and go limp. With a last gigantic effort, Ned jerked the captain free and kicked his way to the surface, gasping for breath. In the darkness which now had fallen completely, he still could not see who it was he had saved. He held the head of the drowning man above the water and shouted to the men on the *Nautilus.*

"Throw me a line, you scuts!" he bellowed, and in quick response the crewmen went into action.

Ned seized the rope that was thrown to him and looped it under the captain's arms. As the men pulled him toward the deck, he held Nemo's head carefully above water. Eager hands reached down and pulled both men aboard.

Ned Land gave but a passing glance to the dark form that lay on the deck—no more than he might have done had it been a dog he had rescued. His satisfied attention was all lavished upon the spot where the monster he had conquered—almost single-handed—had sunk to its death. He spat in its direction. Then, with a word to no one, and still unaware of the identity of the rescued man, he turned to make his way to the forward hatch.

He had taken no more than a step or two when something said by one of the sailors around the rescued man—a single sentence coming out of the babble of voices—made him stop dead in his tracks.

"Thank God, the captain will be all right!"

Ned whirled upon his heel and stared at the shadowy group. Just at that moment the lights went on.

The illumination revealed Captain Nemo, now on his feet, being supported by his men. His head was rolling, his eyes glazed. He was fighting his way back to consciousness. This wilted, sodden being did not now bear much resemblance to the autocratic and ruthless dictator of the *Nautilus!*

But it was not his enemy's appearance that stirred the harpooner. Rather, it was the incongruity of the act he had just performed. He stared in disbelief. His mouth hung open. An idiotic grin began to spread over his face and then all of a sudden he threw back his head and laughed! He roared! He stamped his feet on the deck and bellowed uncontrollably.

The crewmen looked at him in amazement. They did not see the joke. Still the harpooner's fit of mirth continued until it seemed he would burst with it. The uproar even penetrated briefly to Captain Nemo. He raised his head and stared, uncomprehendingly.

Still convulsed, Ned finally turned and shambled toward the hatchway. Even after he had gone below, those on deck could hear his loud guffaws.

The grim affair over, the *Nautilus* proceeded on her way once more. The fight with the squid had cost the life of one crew member. His absence had not been noticed until

it was too late to turn about and make a search. The presumption was that he had been swept from the deck and drowned instantly.

If any benefit could be said to have accrued from the encounter with the terrible sea beasts, it was to the advantage of Ned Land. Nemo, having found out that he owed his life to the harpooner, did not demand that the latter be returned to the brig. Nor did he inquire how his rescuer had gotten out of confinement in the first place. It was pretty plain to him who had been responsible for that act.

Sometime after he had regained his strength and composure, the captain had a brief interview with Ned. He found the harpooner alone in his cabin, lounging on his bunk and playing his homemade guitar. He was singing a ribald song and there was a raw odor of alcohol in the room.

Nemo stood in the open doorway, looking down at the whaler. Ned Land turned his head with arrogant deliberation and acknowledged the captain's presence with a raised eyebrow and a mocking smirk. He stopped playing but did not put the instrument aside.

"You saved my life," said Nemo slowly. "I've come to ask you—why?"

Ned sat up, his feet hanging over the side of the bunk. The smirk was still on his face as he brushed a chord from his guitar, but his words were bitter.

"I'd a-thought you could have figured that out yourself, Mr. Nemo."

The captain merely nodded without changing expression. "It's as I suspected," he said coldly. "You didn't know it was I."

"That's right," replied Land. "If I'd known, I might have saved the other monster."

He plinked a few more chords.

"Any other questions, sir?" he asked insolently.

Nemo's eyes blazed for a second. Then his face froze.

"No," he answered icily, and stepping out, he closed the door.

Behind the door the singing resumed.

"Old man Nemo fed his crew
  On worms and fishes,
Served 'em slimy cold
  On seaweed dishes—
Fed 'em snakes and squid
  Instead of good red beef,
Had his stinkin' mess room
  A-smellin' like a reef!"

Nemo stood stock-still, clenching and unclenching his fists. Then he snorted with contempt and walked away down the passage.

When he reached Aronnax's door, he stopped. Inside, he could see the professor seated at his desk, writing busily. The older man looked up, and seeing the captain, hastily closed the book before him.

Nemo stepped into the room.

"No need to conceal it," he said. "I am quite aware that you are keeping a journal of this trip. Oh, you need not look so injured," he continued. "I make it my business to know everything that is going on."

Aronnax shrugged. "I have just made an entry about our battle with the squids."

"And I daresay that you have written your Mr. Land down as a hero in the best tradition of cheap fiction," said Nemo. His lip curled with mocking disdain.

"You do not consider your life cheap, do you, Captain?" asked Aronnax pointedly.

"Actually he's sorry he saved my life. It was an accident," was Nemo's scornful answer. "He regrets it as much as I would regret saving his miserable hide!"

Aronnax flipped the pages of his diary thoughtfully.

"Do you know what I think, Captain? I suspect that you are deeply touched by Ned's act—accidental or not—"

Nemo cut him off brusquely. "You are a very gullible man, Professor. Too easily swayed by good deeds over bad. You, the typical scholar with his nose buried in his books, are too nearsighted to realize that good and bad are not measured on such a small scale. The world is more complex than that."

Startled by his vehemence, Aronnax looked up with some concern. What was this unreasonable man trying to tell him?

"From the moment you came aboard the *Nautilus,* I had hoped that you might be the key to a plan I had been form-

ing in my mind. I hoped to make you my emissary to the world—and ultimately perhaps to *Them!* That is the only reason why you are alive today. Now I see how weak—how foolish was this idea."

"Is it that you no longer have trust in me?" asked Aronnax calmly. He felt no fear nor even any disappointment.

"No," replied Nemo. "Your fatal shortcoming is that you are ever the optimist—the romantic. Never the realist." The angry note crept back into his voice. "As my ambassador I would have needed a man of iron determination, one who could never be swayed from my convictions that peace will come to the world only when *They* are forced to lay down their arms and abolish their slave camps. No—you would be too easily fooled by their tricks."

Aronnax thought it his duty to make a last try. "I am greatly in favor of your plan. If you would let me try, I think I could persuade them. . . ." But he realized how lame it sounded.

Nemo, ignored the remark completely.

"We will soon be nearing Vulcania. I want you to see there the extent of those secrets for which they hounded and tortured me and for which they took the lives of those dearest to me. I will unveil for you the knowledge of the ultimate power that you are craving to know." His eyes flashed. "That power is still mine—and mine alone! Energy enough to lift all mankind from the depths of hell into a perfect heaven."

He turned abruptly and left.

Alone at his desk, Aronnax sighed deeply. Vulcania! And the great secret! To be his at last! Strangely the thought did not fill him with exultation. He felt very sad, very old, and very weary.



CHAPTER 21

The Last Time

There were no more incidents on the undersea road that led the *Nautilus* to the inevitable climax of her remarkable voyage. Traveling at top speed, not many days had passed before it became evident that home waters had been reached at last. An air of expectancy and relief seemed to pervade the ship.

More and more, during this time, it was Captain Nemo who sought the company of Professor Aronnax. To all outward appearances, the professor was receptive, for his kindly nature would not let him be otherwise. But it was clear to Nemo that a radical change had taken place in the learned man's attitude toward himself and the *Nautilus*. Aronnax no longer asked eager questions. He did not even encourage discussion of any of the subjects that had once been his near-obsession. Even hints about the great secret did not arouse any active show of enthusiasm in him.

Captain Nemo, however, decided to ignore the professor's changed feelings. He had made up his mind to invite

Aronnax to an open discussion of his, Nemo's, major discoveries. Having reached home waters, he called the professor to his cabin with this end in view.

But Fate had decreed otherwise!

The two men had barely exchanged civilities and settled down with their lighted cigars, when there came a rap on the door. To Nemo's impatient query, the mate, André, stepped into the cabin.

"We've raised Vulcania, sir," he reported, in a voice that was devoid of all emotion.

"Then why have we stopped?" asked Nemo, at once alert and rising from his chair.

"There are warships ahead, sir."

"Bearing what flag?" demanded the captain with rising excitement.

"No flag, sir."

"Ambushed!" cried Nemo. "Very well! We'll sink them. All! No matter how many there are!" He brushed past the mate. "Sound the call for action," he ordered and made his way quickly to the control room. The mate and Aronnax followed.

A light fog was rising from a glassy sea. Vulcania lay, faintly obscured by mist, a scant two miles away; a rugged island of sheer cliffs topped at one end by a high volcanic cone. The peak of this mountain stood clear above the cloud bank, shimmering in the sunlight.

Between the *Nautilus* and the island, the dark shapes of the enemy warships could be seen emerging from the mist.

They were in formation, grimly ready and waiting. Nemo studied the sinister scene through his telescope. Aronnax and the mate waited for a word from the captain. There was a look on his face neither of them had ever seen there before—a compound of fury and hopelessness.

"This is a dark hour," said Nemo heavily. He handed the mate the telescope. "Their landing parties are already ashore. They are making their way up the sides of the volcano. How could they have found my secret hiding place? How?"

"They'll be over the summit in half an hour, sir," said the mate.

"Less than that," said Nemo bitterly. Then, deliberately, having reached a decision, he added, "They think they'll take my secrets by force, but they shall not! Now no one shall have them! Everything must be destroyed before they reach the lagoon! Ready to dive!"

"Diving stations!" barked the mate.

"Ahead, full!" Nemo took the wheel. "Down four degrees."

"Four degrees down, all power." The mate took his station.

Aronnax turned to go. He had learned to keep out of the way during serious operations.

"You may stay," muttered Nemo. "You will see our secret passage."

Aronnax stood where he could look out of the forward ports. The *Nautilus* had submerged quickly. The water

around them was crystal clear. Ahead loomed the rocky base of the island. The professor could see no opening, no tunnel or passageway. It was frightening to watch the cruel, jagged rocks coming ever nearer. He looked at Nemo. The captain showed perfect control and confidence. Overhead floated the long dark hulls of the warships. Suddenly the submarine's searchlight went on and illuminated the rocky area ahead with a circular spot of light. At Nemo's crisp commands, the *Nautilus* banked left, then right, as jagged reefs went by. Then, clearly before them, not more than two hundred yards away, was the dark mouth of what looked like a tunnel. Aronnax gasped involuntarily. It seemed barely large enough to admit their vessel. It would take the most skillful navigation to negotiate it.

Aronnax held his breath as the *Nautilus* slowly wormed her way through, it seemed with only inches to spare. He held on to a stanchion as the deck tilted sharply now left, now right. Perspiration ran down his face at the thought of what it would mean to run afoul of the rocks around them.

But soon the water ahead began to lighten. They were reaching the other end of the passageway.

"Half power," ordered Nemo. "Full astern." He looked at Aronnax with something like the old air of triumph. Then he ordered, "Surface—make ready for landing."

Slowly the bright ceiling which was the surface of the water seemed to come down upon them and sudden daylight flooded the control room as the *Nautilus* broke the waters of a lagoon.



Aronnax looked eagerly to see what manner of place Nemo's inner sanctum might be. They were in a completely land-locked lake which nestled like a gem at the bottom of a volcanic crater. Towering walls of rock rose steeply to the cone. Along one side of the shore were the evidences of the captain's activities. A cluster of gray concrete buildings rose tier on tier up this side of the crater. Prominent was a huge circular installation which Aronnax took to be a solar machine of some sort. What some of the other structures were he could not even guess, but on the beach he recognized a craft similar to the *Nautilus* under construction.

The entire area appeared to be deserted. No one was about. No one was busy at the machinery. No one was on the wharf. Evidently the men who were on the *Nautilus* comprised Captain Nemo's entire following.

As the anchor chains rattled, Nemo left his post, calling several of his crewmen to accompany him. He did not include Aronnax. Nevertheless, the professor followed him as far as the stair well and watched the little landing party disappear out of the hatchway.

By this time, Ned Land and Conseil had come out into the passageway.

"What's all the hullabaloo?" queried the harpooner. "What are we stopping for?"

"We are at the base—at Vulcania. And the island is surrounded by warships," replied Aronnax.

"Warships!" echoed Ned as he exchanged a significant glance with Conseil. "Well, kingdom come! I've got to be

in on this, matey." He bounded up the stairs to the deck.

Nemo and two of his men were already in the skiff. The captain turned briefly to his mate, who had come out of the other hatch. "Have everything ready to cast off the instant I return," he directed. Then he took his seat and the men rowed the boat rapidly toward the dock.

Aronnax and Conseil reached the deck also and joined Ned. They were suddenly startled to hear the report of a musket coming from up near the cone of the crater.

"Hey!" cried Ned, pointing. "The guards! What are they shooting for?"

"Those are not guards," Aronnax corrected him. "Those are Nemo's enemies. They've landed from the warships to attack the island."

"By Hesperus!" Ned gloated. "Look at them swarming down. What kind of uniforms—?" He interrupted himself as the answer dawned on him. "It's *Them!* I couldn't have wished for better! This is justice, men. Real justice!" he exulted. "Chickens a-coming home to roost at last."

He said no more as several bullets clanked upon the deck and superstructure of the *Nautilus*. All three men scrambled back into the open hatch from which, protected by the cover, they could watch developments.

Captain Nemo had now reached the dock and leaped ashore. He ran with long strides toward the nearest of the flat gray buildings. Puffs of dust around him showed where enemy bullets were seeking him as he fled. But he reached the building safely and disappeared inside.

Meanwhile the oarsmen were shunting the boat toward the other side of the dock. Bullets lashed the water about them but they, too, made it in safety.

"What's his nibs up to?" asked Ned. "Is he deserting us?"

"He said he was going to destroy everything rather than have it fall into their hands."

"He'll never make it," scoffed Ned. "They're coming down fast. His goose is cooked."

The soldiers in the strange uniforms were indeed almost halfway down the slope already—slipping and sliding, stopping long enough to load and fire, then hurrying on. There were easily a hundred of them.

"It seems to me he could destroy them easily with his wonderful weapons," puzzled Conseil. "He must have electric guns handy, perhaps even electric cannons. He is very resourceful."

"Perhaps he could hold them off this time," said Aronnax, "but I think he knows that once his hiding place is discovered it would be only a matter of time before—"

A bullet struck viciously close. All three ducked down into the hatch.

"Wait a minute," cried Ned Land. "We're overlooking something, aren't we? These are our rescuers, no matter what uniform they wear. I'm going to let them know we're here."

He started out of the hatchway, ripping off his striped shirt as he went. Aronnax's detaining hand could not stop him. Leaping up on top of the wheelhouse, the harpooner

braced himself and waved his shirt frantically.

"Hey you! Up there!" he bellowed. "We're friends! Don't shoot!"

In response, a volley of musket fire sent a spattering of bullets down upon the deck of the *Nautilus*. A few struck dangerously close to Ned. But the obvious danger of his position did not faze him. He waved his shirt more violently and shouted even louder.

"Don't shoot! We're friends, I tell you. We're the ones that threw the bottles over. We sent the messages!"

The answer from the hillside was another burst of bullets, one of which ripped through his waving shirt. With an exclamation of disgust he sprang from the wheelhouse and made a bound for the open hatch. His hasty entry pushed Conseil and Aronnax back down the stairs.

On the landing, the three faced each other, Ned fuming and Aronnax frowning.

"That's gratitude for you," growled Ned. "After all I did for them."

There was quiet accusation in Aronnax's voice as the truth came to him. "Could it be you who is responsible for these warships being here?"

"Aye," answered Ned proudly. "That it was. Somebody had to strike a blow for freedom. Don't tell me you ain't glad there's an end to all this?"

Outside, the musket fire was beating a steady tattoo. Aronnax looked up to the light of the open hatch where an occasional bullet pinged. He shook his head sadly.

"I know there had to be an end to Nemo's strange tale, but somehow I wish it might have been different. Don't ask me how. But not like this, just . . . different." He sighed and left them.

A cheer from the soldiers on the hillside reached Ned and Conseil. They looked at each other. Then Ned sprang up the stairs once again.

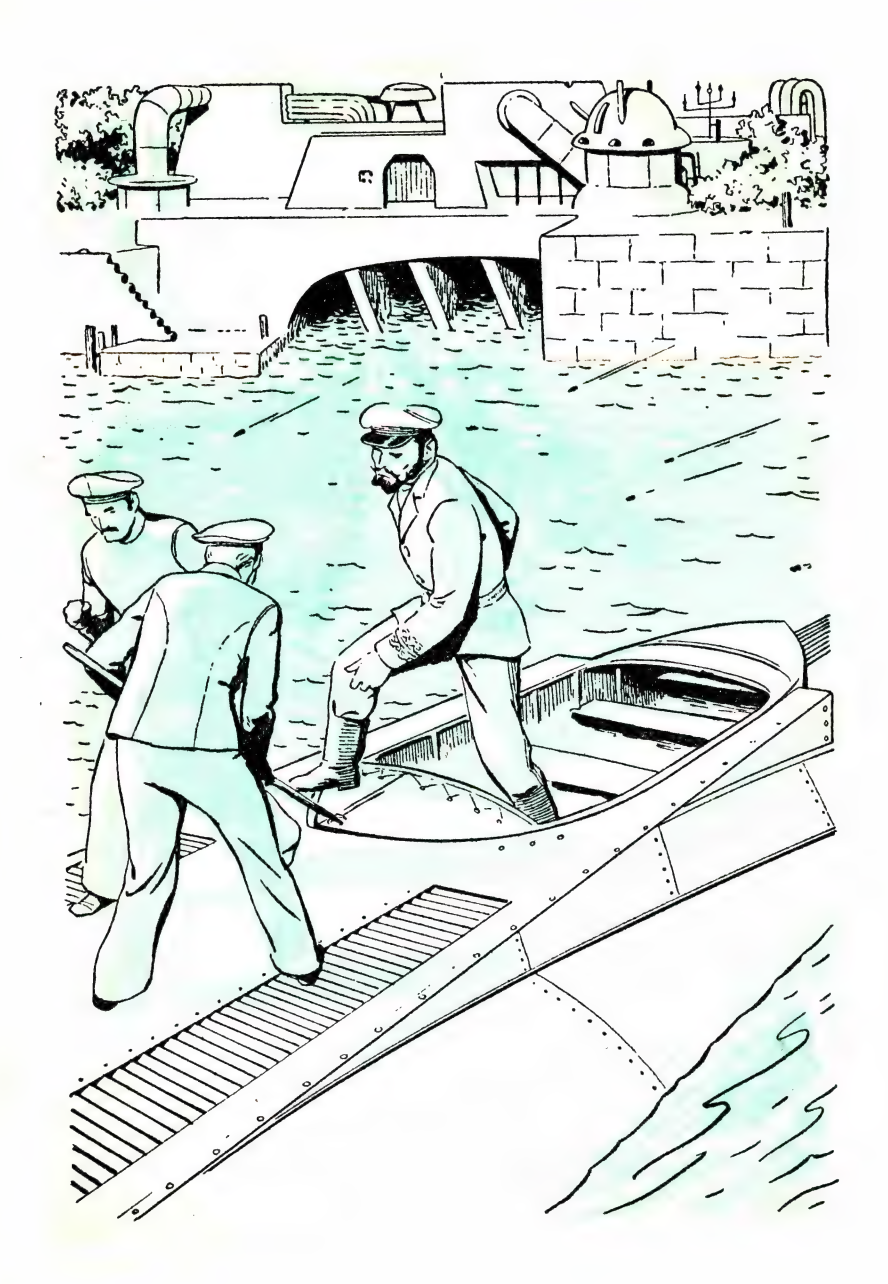
"Something's happening! Got to see it. Got to be in on the death!" he called excitedly.

On the deck, Ned looked shoreward to see Captain Nemo running swiftly from the warehouse to the pier. Some of the soldiers had already reached the upper tier of buildings. Musket balls were again ripping about the captain. He was a bold and prominent target. How was it possible that the soldiers could miss him so consistently? Ned angrily cursed their marksmanship.

Once the captain stumbled and Ned cried, "Hah!" in glee. But the next moment Nemo was running again—to the pier and then with a flying leap into the boat. In no time at all, it was skimming swiftly toward the *Nautilus*. And although the bullets viciously peppered the water around the dinghy, not one found its mark. Nemo seemed to bear a charmed life.

Alongside the *Nautilus,* Nemo impelled the two oarsmen out onto the deck before vaulting aboard himself. Quickly he secured the boat. The musket fire was getting hotter.

Nemo was now only thirty feet from the protection of the open hatch. Crouching as he ran, the captain negotiated



the distance safely. Then, straightening up to his full height, he faced the soldiers who had now reached the pier, and shook his fist defiantly at them. It was a fatal gesture.

With awful impact, a bullet ripped into his body. He staggered and clutched his breast. Another bullet spun him halfway around. Slowly and painfully, he lowered himself into the opening and down into the safety of the submarine.

Ned Land, who had been forced down to the landing when the two boatmen had flung hastily down the stairs, stood looking up into the square of daylight above him. When Captain Nemo's shadowy form blocked out the opening, he snapped his fingers and with an oath of disgust strode away to the salon, a disappointed man.

He did not, therefore, see how slowly the captain made his way down the stairs. Nor did the crewmen notice anything strange in Nemo's bearing, since orders had already been given for securing for sea and each man was at his station. The hatch cover clanged shut as Nemo reached the landing.

The mate and several crewmen were at their assigned posts in the control room when the captain entered. With great effort, he stepped purposefully to the wheel, taking it from the steersman and motioning him aside.

"I'll take over now," he said in a strained voice.

The helmsman gave him a searching look as he stepped back.

"Blow all ballast! Stand by power!"

Nemo's voice broke as he gave the order and he reeled

forward; his head sank low over the wheel.

"You're wounded, sir," cried the mate in shocked tones. He took a quick step toward his captain.

"No matter," replied Nemo harshly. "Stay at your post, sir. Give me full power ahead!"

With a stricken look upon his face, the mate resumed his station and relayed the order. Only his eyes, straying from their duty, anxiously sought the face of his wounded commander.

Outside, the musket balls were still rattling on the superstructure. Some flattened on the thick glass of the forward ports as the *Nautilus* came about for her return trip. The turn completed, the water crept up and over the glass of the ports as the submarine slanted down toward the mouth of the tunnel.

Nemo braced himself at the wheel, fighting the pain of his wounds. Beads of sweat stood out on his forehead. By sheer will power he kept his eyes glued on the circle of light thrown ahead of the ship by its searchlight. But will power was not enough.

Again and again, the jutting wall of the tunnel scourged the sides of the *Nautilus,* tearing at her terrifyingly. Suddenly a wall loomed ahead and those in the control room braced for a head-on crash. A lurch on the wheel at the last moment jerked her away from danger. The next moment another rocky mass was before them. This time it was too late to maneuver. The *Nautilus* went crunching through headlong, reducing the jutting reef to spinning

rubble and tearing her keel horribly.

Still the dying man at the wheel hung on grimly. Blood flecked his lips. Deep groans escaped through his tightly clenched teeth. Another sidewise swipe of the tunnel wall almost tore him from the wheel. But he would not yield.

Then at last the black water of the tunnel was past and the *Nautilus* was swimming free in the crystal seas outside. Captain Nemo bowed his head low.

"You may take the helm," he gasped. "And slow on power . . . all controls . . . eight degrees down . . . André, help me. . . ."

The mate stepped forward but too late to keep the captain from collapsing to the floor. The other crewmen rushed to him and they all knelt beside him. Gently the mate raised the captain's head. Nemo looked at them, his eyes still burning with intelligence and purpose.

"Lash the wheel," he said slowly. And repeated, "Lash the wheel. . . ."

The men looked at each other. They knew his order spelled doom for the *Nautilus* and all on board, but there was no flinching. Only complete acceptance of their leader's command. Silently, one of the crewmen carried out the order while the mate and the others bore the dying man into the salon.

Ned Land and the two Frenchmen were in the salon as the little group entered the forward door.

"Something is wrong," cried Aronnax in alarm. "Captain Nemo is injured!"

He rushed forward to help but the mate waved him aside brusquely. Gently the men put the captain down on the settee. The room was beginning to fill now with other members of the crew. Ned Land forced himself forward among them to look at the wounded man. His were the only eyes in the room that did not show grief. And yet, there was no audible expression of sorrow from any of the men. All stood silent, dry-eyed, in deep reverence before this great, unfathomable man who had led them so bravely and who was now about to leave them forever.

The captain spoke.

"We are taking the *Nautilus* down . . . for the . . . last time . . . . " he whispered.

The mate knelt down beside him. "Aye, sir," he answered in a gentle voice. "We understand, sir." He looked around at the crew. Each man in his turn nodded. There was no fear on any face.

"Wait a minute," cried Ned Land in a loud angry voice. "What's this got to do with us?"

He said no more. Two of the crewmen seized him firmly from behind and pulled him away from Nemo.

Nemo stared up with heavy eyes, struggling to comprehend. He fixed Ned Land with his dying stare.

"I am dying . . . and the *Nautilus* is dying with me."

A spasm of pain closed his eyes again. He turned his head away and murmured, "Here in our last deep resting place we will all find peace."

Ned struggled furiously in the grasp of the crewmen.

"You see, Professor!" he yelled. "He's committing suicide and he's taking us with him. It's murder! Cold-blooded murder!"

Nemo opened his eyes again and looked to the mate.

"Lock them in their quarters," he said faintly. "Then you and the crew . . . go to yours . . . and remain there."

"Aye, sir," replied the mate. He stood up and signaled to the men.

"Don't let them do it!" shouted Ned to the professor and he redoubled his efforts to break free, crying, "All I ask is a fighting chance."

But his desperate struggles availed him nothing. He was dragged from the room after the departing crewmen. Only the mate and Aronnax were left with Nemo now, the former awaiting the professor.

Aronnax stood by the settee, looking down at the strange, tormented genius who would soon be no more.

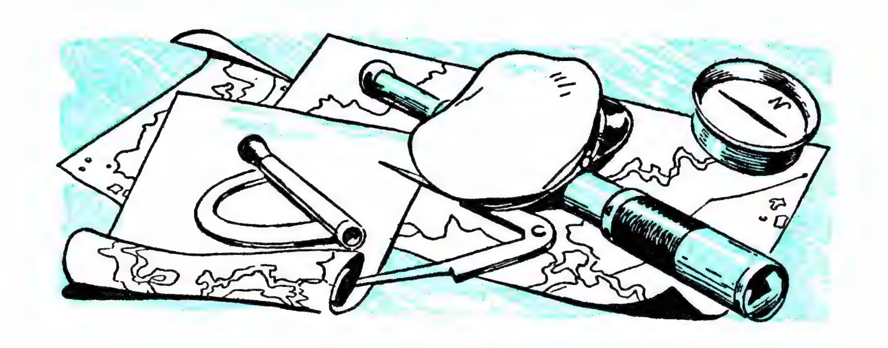
"Why are you doing this?" he asked sadly. "Why must your last act be so unreasonable—so heartless—so cruel?"

No answer came from the captain. He no longer heard. His order could not be rescinded.

The mate took Aronnax's arm. "Come, let us go," he said, and together they left the room.

Nemo was alone. He turned his head to look for the last time upon his beloved ocean. Overhead, the bell chimed off the fathoms as the *Nautilus* sank ever deeper toward the bottom. A smile, faint but unmistakable, softened the grimness of his blood-flecked lips. With a great effort, he raised

his hand, feeling for the controls of the viewport shutters. For the last time they functioned, spiraling in slowly as his hand fell away. When the window was closed, he turned his head away. He sighed deeply and did not move again.



CHAPTER 22

The Greatest of Wonders

Conseil allowed himself to be led, unresisting, to his cabin. He was filled with dull despair. Death had become familiar in the last months although somehow it had always been held at bay. This time Conseil felt a difference. There was no appeal. It was finished and he would not fight the inevitable.

Not so Ned Land. Calling on his tremendous reserves of strength, he tore away from his two captors and dashed back into the passageway, only to run into André escorting Aronnax to his quarters. Quickly applying an oriental wrestling hold, the officer pinioned Ned and with the help of some crewmen managed to subdue him.

"Put him in my quarters," the mate ordered.

"Don't give up, lads," bellowed the harpooner as they dragged him off. "We're not any part of a suicide pact. . . ."

The crewmen hustled him into the cabin, but before they had a chance to back out, he threw himself crosswise against their legs and sent them crashing back against the bunk.

Then he hurled himself out of the door and attacked the mate who was still barring the passage. His fist landed squarely on the officer's mouth and sent the mate reeling back against the opposite door.

Behind Ned, in the cabin, one of the sailors had recovered and was back in the fight. Ned whirled, and with one furious blow returned him to the floor beside his companion. Then, slamming the door of the cabin, the harpooner seized a bar from a bracket and barricaded the door.

As the bar fell into place, the mate, recovering from the effects of the first blow, seized Ned's arm and spun him violently about. But he was given no second chance to subdue the harpooner. Skillfully dodging, Ned planted another hard smash upon the mate's face and he flew back with such force that his head actually dented the bulkhead. He collapsed to the floor with a muffled groan and did not stir.

With a triumphant hoot, the harpooner rushed up the ladder to the control room. There was no one to stop him now for every one of the other crewmen had gone to his quarters to await the death the commander had ordered. As he burst into the control room, the lashed wheel immediately caught his eye. He ripped the ropes away and then sprang to the elevating levers, whipping them back in furious haste. As the downward slope of the ship began to right itself, he whirled the power controls. The *Nautilus* surged forward and upward.

He seized the wheel to steady her and too late looked up

to see an overhanging shelf of rock looming squarely in his path. With a fearful crash, the submarine smashed into it full tilt. The shuddering impact hurled Ned away from the wheel. He did not need to be told that the ship had received a mortal wound.

Picking himself up, he vaulted down the stairway. In the passageway below, the walls were buckled and all about was the sound of the ocean pouring into the broken hull. An onrushing torrent of water threw him to his knees. As he staggered to his feet, he was startled to see the mate, revived by the water, rise up before him and bar his way.

In his hand, the mate now held a harpoon which had evidently been dropped in the passageway. Although he still suffered from the effects of the knockout blow, he stood braced and poised, waiting for Ned. Both men were intent on this battle to the death.

It was short and decisive. Skilled wrestler that he was, and even armed with a deadly weapon, the mate was no match for a master of rough-and-tumble brawling such as Ned. Lashing out suddenly with his foot, the whaler kicked the harpoon from his opponent's hand. Then following up with a neat overhand right smash to the jaw and a stiff left to the midriff, he sent the mate splashing down in a heap for the last time. The unconscious man lay still while the water rushed over his submerging body.

Now Ned continued to Aronnax's door. He wrenched the bolt from it, flung it open, and called to the two men who were inside:



"Come on! I've taken over the ship. We've got to get out of here before she sinks."

They stared at him, unbelieving at first. Then, as in a dream, they followed as he led them along the swirling corridor. By the time they had fought their way to the stairs, the water was already sloshing around their waists and pouring down from the control room above. Looking up, they saw daylight flooding the chamber and they knew that the *Nautilus* had broken the surface. She had made her way back from the depths!

"We're on the surface!" cried Ned as he fought his way up the stairs. "Stand by!"

He reached the control room and tugged at the levers which opened the hatch. Conseil stood beside him watching anxiously as the hatch cover lifted. But to Ned's amazement, Aronnax turned in a dazed fashion and began to go back down to the lower level.

"Hey! Professor!" he called in loud astonishment. "Where are you going?"

"My journal," faltered Aronnax. "If it is not too late . . . there are valuable facts . . . data. . . ." He stopped and looked at the harpooner with a confused expression on his face.

"There's no time, I tell you," Ned screamed at him. "This tub will sink any minute!" He took the professor's arm firmly and called to Conseil, "Quick! Up the ladder!" And he helped the professor follow his colleague up the stairs to the deck of the *Nautilus*.

Just at that moment, he heard the plaintive bark of Nemo's seal, coming from below. How could he allow his little friend to be caught like a rat in a trap! Disregarding his own warning about going back, he turned and rushed down the stairs and into the flooding chart room. He wrenched open the door of the seal's compartment and it swam out immediately, barking joyously. It followed Ned back to the stairs, where he picked it up and carried it, barking and squirming, up the stairs and on to the deck. With a final pat on the head, he threw it overboard with the words, "See you in the zoo, Snoopy!"

While waiting for him, Aronnax and Conseil had managed to get into the dinghy. Conseil held the little boat against the side of the submarine while Ned boarded it. Then, taking the oars, the whaler stroked the dinghy rapidly away from the sinking *Nautilus*. Following happily in their wake and barking loudly, Snoopy trailed them, intent on remaining with his human friends as long as possible.

A hundred yards or so from the submarine, Ned brought the skiff around and rested on the oars. All three men looked at the foundering ship.

"She's sinking fast," commented Ned flatly. For once there was no note of triumph in his voice, as though he almost regretted the end of this hated enemy after all.

He turned away now toward the island of Vulcania which lay some miles to their left, clearly defined against the tropical skies.

"Didn't you say the island was going to blow up?" he asked the professor.

"Yes, that is what Captain Nemo went ashore to do," answered Aronnax.

"Well, it's taking its own good time, then," said Ned skeptically. "Or else the great maestro's last bit of fireworks was a dud. That would be a good joke on him!"

"It is just as well for those warships," commented Conseil. "They are so close to it that they would be sure to suffer from an explosion."

"Just the same, though," said Ned moodily, "I wish it would come off."

His wish was granted.

As the three men looked at Vulcania, the whole island was suddenly enveloped in a brilliant glare, countless times brighter than the noonday sun! For seconds they were completely blinded by this dazzling light. When they could see again, they beheld an enormous column of fire rearing itself with terrifying speed to the heavens. A vast mushroom-shaped cloud of smoke billowed out and up, sending fiery streamers arcing over the steaming waters.

Then came the sound!

And with it, the forces released by the tremendous eruption!

The men flattened themselves to the bottom as the little boat was literally blown along the surface of the ocean. They held their ears, but still the frightful thunder of the blast penetrated to their brains—a crush of sound that was almost

a physical thing. If it had continued for long, they would have gone mad, but fortunately it abated, and all that could be heard finally was the turbulent sloshing of the agitated sea.

The three men sat up and looked at each other with horror in their eyes. What they had experienced was far beyond their comprehension, even that of Aronnax the scholar. Ned was the first to dare look again toward the island.

He exhaled his breath in a sharp whistle.

"It's gone," he said, in awed tones. "By jubillo! Vulcania is gone!"

The others now looked also. Aronnax found it difficult to speak.

"Yes, all is gone," he said, aghast. "All that remains is that cloud above the ocean where the dream of a very great and a very unhappy man has vanished into nothingness."

"He took his enemies with him," added Conseil. "I see no sign of the warships."

"And he and his spooky crew are heading for Davey Jones's locker, too," put in the harpooner. "For I can see no *Nautilus*."

They all looked in silence again at the towering cloud on the horizon, each with his own thoughts.

Finally Conseil spoke.

"Do you suppose the secret in that cloud will ever become the common knowledge of mankind, Professor?"

"My dear friend," replied Aronnax, "no matter how much it may appear to the contrary, man progresses slowly

but surely toward that ideal state of which he constantly dreams. All that we have seen on this voyage, all the unspeakable wonders that were revealed so briefly to us, will come to pass in their time. Yes, these and many more! And then perhaps will come that greatest of all wonders—men will discover how to live in peace with one another."

"And I say 'amen' to that," said Conseil humbly.

Ned's excited voice broke in. "And I say, let's start rowing toward that frigate coming up over the horizon yonder." He pointed. "Unless I'm mistaken, mates, she's heading right for us and she's flying the good old American flag!"





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The Adventure at Chimney Rock
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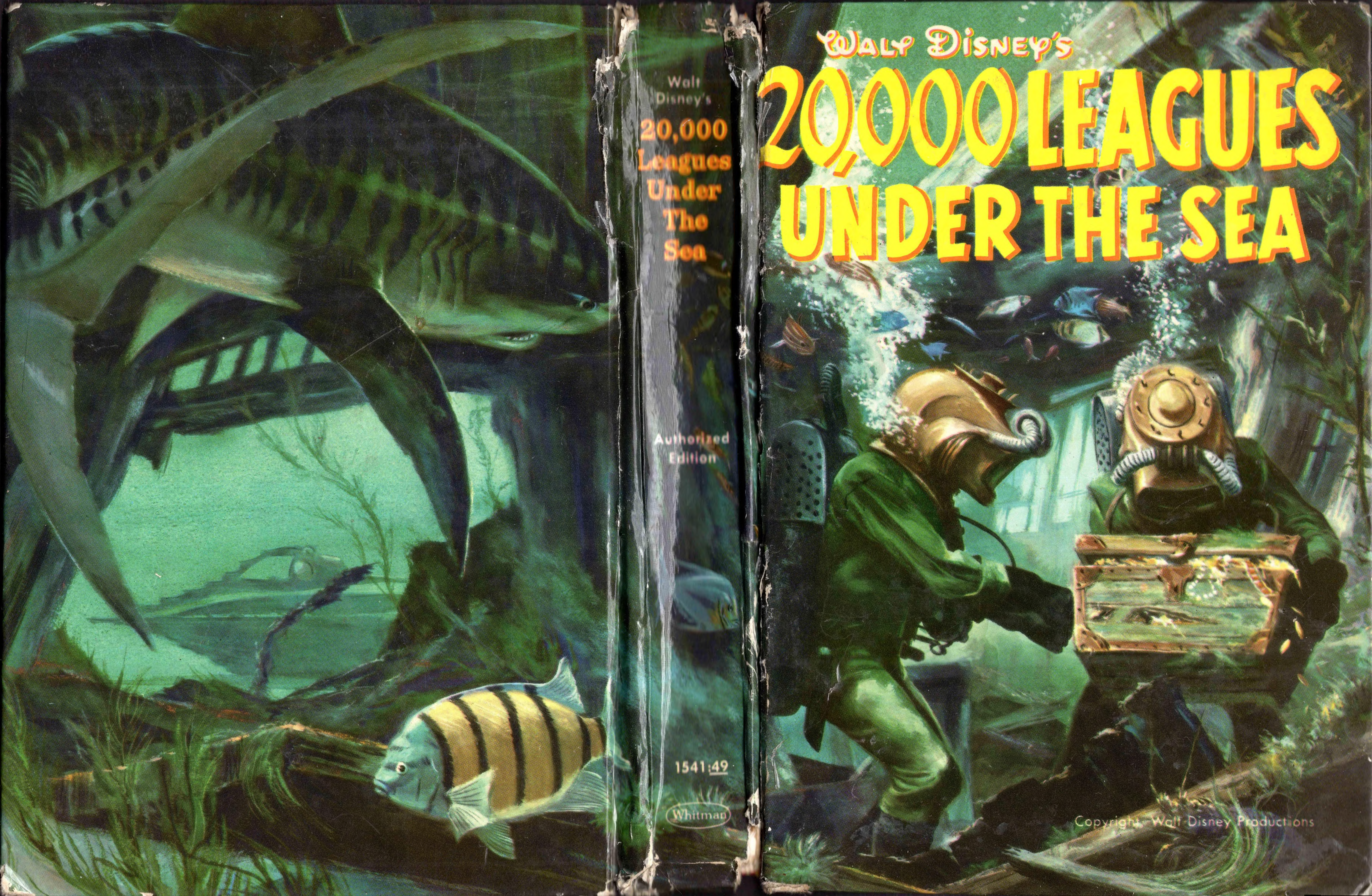
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